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Fake realities: Assassination and race in popular culture

A Thesis Presented

by

KEVIN MARINELLA

Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies  
Bridgewater State University  
Bridgewater, Massachusetts

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Fake realities: Assassination and race in popular culture

A Thesis Presented

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MAY 2018

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### **ABSTRACT**

Since the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 terrorist attacks the United States had been involved in conflicts across the globe. These conflict have given rise to the use of target killing, commonly known as assassination as a way to eliminate enemies of the United States. A majority of those killed are of Middle-Eastern descent and/or are followers of Islam. Elements of American popular culture since 9/11 have portrayed assassination, with the antagonists generally being of Middle-Eastern or Muslim descent while the protagonist being a white American or from a country allied with the United States who is involved in the conflict. By using a case study analysis of six fictional novels, three films and two television series, this study will examine the negative portrayals of Arabs, Muslims and individuals who go against the idea of whiteness and Americanness.

Key terms: ASSASSINATION, MIDDLE-EAST, POPULAR CULTURE, ISLAM, CRITICAL RACE THEORY

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter 1: Introduction, literature review and project description – pg. 6

Chapter 2: Novels that portray assassination – pg. 25

Chapter 3: Films that portray assassination – p. 65

Chapter 4: Television series that portray assassination – pg. 85

Chapter 5: Conclusion – pg. 98

Works cited – pg. 103

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### *Project introduction*

The U.S. has a love for consumerism mainly in regards to popular culture, this consumerism may take many forms, films, television, food, fashion, books and other trends. Some of these stay stable in the society, American films may change, but a majority of people will still go to movie theaters to see the next big film or 'blockbuster'. The same can be said for television; certain shows will develop a popular following and may continue for an extended period of time. Lastly, though not as popular in some respects, literature is a benchmark in U.S. society; there are best-selling books that are talked about (some of which will be adapted into film).

There is a more sinister aspect that defines America at the same time, its tendency to engage in warfare. With the advent of the Global War on Terror, the United States has been engaged in conflict for well over fifteen years. This has led to high number of casualties across the globe, destruction of countries, increased terrorism and controversy on how warfare is conducted (Sanders, 2014). One of these controversies is the United States use of assassination. Though it is illegal under U.S. and international law, it is still used as a means to conduct warfare (Sanders, 2014). The use of assassination by countries is not limited to the U.S. however, but also its allies such as Israel (Sanders, 2014). Though there is the question on what constitutes the definition of assassination, the definition will be explained later in this chapter.

The United States has wonderful aspects in its society that allows leisure activities to be performed, at the same time, the country also engages in illegal warfare as a way to combat terrorism. The use of assassination has managed to merge with popular culture elements such as

film, television and books. This has led to a variety of popular culture elements glorifying (and justifying) assassination. There is however a third element that is unspoken in American popular culture and American society, racism. The U.S. has a negative history when it comes to race-relations that is still present in society. These presentations are portrayed in elements of United States popular culture with African-Americans being the ones who have been historically represented (Hall, 1997). For this work however, the racialization and stereotypes presented in popular culture will be that of Muslims and Arabs; with explanations on this being discussed further.

### *Context*

The purpose of this project is to look at how assassinations are portrayed in three main elements of popular culture (literature, film and television) while also looking at the racialization aspect in these works. Part of this is to not only show the negative portrayals of Arabs and Muslims, but also a desensitization aspect towards a serious issue (assassination) as well as bring light to the real issue. Though fictional portrayals of assassination are the primary observations, assassination is something that is embraced by the U.S. government and their allies. These countries have various justifications for their actions (Sanders, 2014). These justifications vary and will be explained further when looking at the definition of assassination. Though the topic of assassination could be explored in various ways, there are specific reasons as to why popular culture portrayals of assassination are the main focus of this project. According to Hall (2005) popular culture and societal views are intertwined, that is public views and perceptions come out of dominant culture norms and shape popular culture. They also work oppositely, that is popular culture can influence societies views on a subject as popular culture itself plays a major role in society (Hall, 2005). In relation to this work, the popular culture content that will be observed is



fictional, it is still popular in society and more importantly it is an accepted form popular culture. If it is accepted in mass media there is a likelihood it is accepted by the masses.

### *Definition of terms*

Though this work touches upon various concepts; such as popular culture and race, assassination is a central main theme and the most important in regards to this work. That being stated, it is imperative to look at the definition of assassination, overall and how it will be examined in this work. Generally (and historically) assassination is defined as a killing that is done for political reasons (Iqbal & Zorn, 2008). Though this is a technical definition, the term has evolved over the years, along with this evolution there is also the question of legality of the term. This has brought in more definitions regarding assassination, even going as far as to change the wording all together from assassination to targeted killing, therefore legitimizing it as an accepted policy (Sanders, 2014). The language itself seems strange and awkward; the use of targeted killing is a real, and extensively used policy. The United States uses it as a way to eliminate those they deem a threat as well as ‘enemy combatants’ mainly members of terrorist organizations (Carson, 2017). These targeted killings are usually performed via drone strikes, but can also be conducted by the use of special operation forces (Carson, 2017). It is known through sources that these attacks occur frequently however the U.S. government will not release the actual numbers of those killed under this policy (Carson, 2017).

The use of targeted killing by the U.S. has been heavily criticized by other nations and the United Nations as a violation of human rights and international law (Arnold, 2013; Sanders, 2014; Carson, 2017). The United States stands behind their U.S. of this and uses the justification of self-defense as well as a proactive approach (Arnold, 2013). The U.S. claims they are defending themselves by killing those who are planning on committing terrorist attacks and also

that these individuals are non-state actors committing terrorist attacks in countries in which they are not a member of nor do they have no business in said countries (Arnold, 2013). Targeted killing has been described, but what exactly is the definition of it?

For a clear definition of target killing, the United Nations has developed one, “A targeted killing is the intentional, premeditated and deliberate use of lethal force, by States or their agents acting under colour of law, or by an organized armed group in armed conflict, against a specific individual who is not in the physical custody of the perpetrator” (Alston, 2010, pp. 3). Sanders notes Alston’s definition in her work and mentions that though the wording has changed, the two are mutually exclusive and have a relation (Sanders, 2014). For this project targeted killing will fall under the umbrella of assassination. Therefore the definitions put forth by the United Nations will be the definition used.

Though there can be many definitions put forth that define assassination, there are two reasons as to why the United Nations policy will be the definition for this particular project. First off; it fits with the current issues at hand, a war with no uniformed enemy but instead individuals acting for organizations. The second reason is that the United Nations is a worldwide organization that has the main purpose of looking at issues that affect the globe, which assassination falls under as it is an act that is committed by various state (and non-state) entities, therefore this is why the U.N.’s definition will be the one observed.

### *Parameters of the project*

The methods that will be used for this project will be case studies, and within these case studies; textual and visual analyses will be employed. The reason for this is that case studies is the preferred method when analyzing single and concise elements such texts and documents (George & Bennet, 2005). One of the first thing that is required is to identify the universe in

which the study (or in this case, studies) will be in “First, the investigator should clearly identify the universe – that is, the “class” or “subclass” of events – of which a single case or a group of cases to be studied are instances” (George & Bennet, 2005, pp. 69). For this project, the universe is books, film and television series that deal with assassination and the classes are those three items, and the subclasses are the specific books, films and television series. The next part is the research objective, strategy and analysis in regards to the cases in question (George & Bennet, 2005). The objective is to find those elements of popular culture that feature assassination. The strategy will be to read books that feature it and watch the shows or film that feature it. Lastly, the books and film will be critiqued and analyzed, specifically the scenes that feature the plotline leading up to the assassination and the assassination itself. The final element of case studies is that there should be variables related to theoretical implications or explanations (George & Bennet, 2005). The variables for this study are how the assassination is portrayed as legitimate, specifically in regards to popular culture along with how the race of the protagonist and antagonist fits in.

There are advantages to using this case study model, however there are also limitations. One advantage is that there is a great deal of cases that will be observed; six fictional novels, three films and three episodes from two television shows. This allows for a broad amount of content analysis to be drawn from these materials, therefore giving more evidence to the hypothesis. This however could prove to be a disadvantage as all of this information could lead to more work on the part of the researcher. These subclasses will require extensive and in-depth analysis therefore time will be needed.

### *Theoretical framework*

The topic of race and ethnicity in the United States is still a widely discussed and a controversial subject. Most of the discussion revolves around historically oppressed minorities in the country, mainly African Americans. Due to this common and negative stereotypes about these individuals have been portrayed in the popular culture in the United States (Hall, 1997). Though this still exists, recent events such as terrorism, mainly radical Islamic terrorism has shaped a negative portrayal of Muslims in American culture. This has led to Muslims to be portrayed as terrorists in aspects like film, television and novels.

Before looking at the portrayal of Muslims in popular culture, it is important to first look at the concept of the 'other' (as Muslims are being put into this category) and how it is representative in society and therefore the media. According to Hall (1997) stereotypes and difference are commonly represented in elements of popular culture and are therein transparent in society. Stereotypes in regards to races and ethnicity can be either positive or negative but usually are static, white individuals are good, while non-white individuals are bad (Hall, 1997). There is also the possibility of these individuals being both good and bad in the context of race (Hall, 1997). That being said, this theme is not necessarily true all time, as dynamics can change for various reasons (Hall, 1997). This is related to the concept of difference.

Difference is something that is common in society, however difference in race is something of importance, and is related to stereotypes. According to Hall (1997) this difference (referred to as racial difference) has a history in the U.S. in regards to popular culture. It occurred primarily after the emancipation of slaves; though they were free they were still portrayed as subservient to whites (Hall, 1997). This later morphed into stereotypes that were common in early twentieth century entertainment, stereotypes such as an obedient 'Tom' who followed his white owners ideals over his fellow African-Americans, the 'Mammie' who was a loyal female

house servant (to whites) and the 'bad bucks' who were violent and criminogenic (Hall, 1997).

These stereotypes found their way into American cinema, and though some have died off, others; such as the violent and crime prone African-American have lingered on (Hall, 1997).

The arrival of the twenty-first century has brought progress in regards to race-relations in the country, which is that how it appears to. According to Bonilla-Silva (2015) though the United States has made progress in the racial landscape such as with the 2008 election of Barrack Obama, the problems are still around. This issue is what is referred to as 'color-blind racism' which is racist and prejudicial ideas that are 'covered up' along with being overall avoided in the discussion of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). This new racism is covered via semantics and linguistic changes, which is individuals, will do their best to hide racist beliefs or stereotypes by what they say, however the racism is still inherent in their language (Bonilla-Silva, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Along with this, individuals will ignore the problem by ignoring the past, such as slavery; by stating that it was a problem of the past and does not need to be revisited (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Statements such as that are adding to the problem as it is avoiding the injustices that occurred in the past (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). This color-blind racism which exists in the U.S. is now becoming a staple element.

The previous summaries have focused on the overall issue of race and how African-Americans are mainly affected by the social views of race and subsequent problems and stereotypes. Along with this language and how we talk about race has changed, as it is not upfront racism anymore, it is hidden. These views and stereotypes spread far beyond African-Americans and have been placed upon Muslims and those of Middle-Eastern heritage. The common stereotype in media is that they are radical terrorists who are plotting deadly attacks (Powell, 2011). This stereotype has been commonplace in America since the September 11th

terrorist attacks (Powell, 2011). The portrayal of Muslims, Middle-Easterners or Arabs as evil, has not been a new phenomenon however, as they have frequently been portrayed in this light well before the 9/11 attacks (Nurullah, 2010). That being said, the September, 11th attacks, coupled with recent military engagements has created those of Middle-Eastern descent as being the enemy (Nurullah, 2010). This in turn has led media and popular culture embracing this stereotype (Nurullah, 2010; Powell 2011). It is important to look at the specifics of these stereotypes in these media and popular culture elements.

As mentioned, the negative stereotype of Muslim and Middle-Easterners existed well before September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001; before the attacks, the Middle-East was viewed as backwards and mysterious; a viewpoint that had been noted by scholar Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). Said's work examined the Western view of the East as a whole however their intense emphasis on the Middle-East and surrounding areas (Said, 1978). The inhabitants of the Middle-East (Orientals as described in his work, as it appears to be an older term), are described in negative ways by Westerners and colonists who were in the areas in question (Said, 1978). The general viewpoint of 'Orientals' is that they are lazy, weak, mischievous and immature (Said, 1978). These viewpoints were stated by Westerners who also viewed themselves as saviors and superior to 'Orientals' (Said, 1978). Said's work assists in demonstrating the traditional views of Arabs and the Western view of them. The view has always been negative and Arabs have been met with distrust. The stereotypes have morphed from mischievous and weak to that of a terrorist.

Other scholars have looked at the phenomenon of Islamophobia and its importance in post 9/11 society. Garner and Selod (2015) look at how Islamophobia has become a central theme in American society. Selod (2015) also examined Islamophobia via qualitative interviews;

not only providing great detail on Islamophobia, but also how it is racialized and how it affects Muslims in everyday life. Both of these works argue that Islam in contemporary society has been racialized; that is those who follow the Islamic religion are being categorized as a race (therefore they are racialized) rather than put in the category of religion (Garner & Selod, 2015). America has started to racialize Islam by using various methods, one of which is constant questioning and suspicion towards Muslims (Selod, 2015). Though Islam is a religion, America and the West has grouped them into a race; primarily due to the fact that there are a wide variety of Muslim who immigrated to the U.S. from various countries; yes they are from different nations with different cultures but they all share one distinct feature, they are Muslim (Selod, 2015). That being said many may not in fact be Muslim but still fit that category by their appearance (Selod, 2015). Along with that, Muslims face barriers and challenges that allow them to fully embrace the American way of life (Selod, 2015). According to Selod (2015), the racialization process is the first that leads to wider discrimination and negative stereotypes.

The racialization of Muslims has led to disruption in their everyday lives. Selod (2015) examined these issues during his interviews with 48 Muslims. The interviews involved questions about the experiences Muslims faced before and after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (Selod, 2015). After the attacks, Muslims faced questioning by others about their citizenship and country of origin than before (Selod, 2015). Arabs (no matter what religion) faced immense questioning about their nationality if they had a darker complexion then compared to those who did not (Selod, 2015). Along with that, Muslim women who wear the hijab in public face higher questioning, criticism and verbal abuse than those who do not (Selod, 2015). In this regard, their skin color does not matter as Muslims who have a fair complexion will still be categorized and singled out (Selod, 2015). For these reasons, Selod (2015) makes the argument that Muslims and

Arabs have indeed become a racialized group in American society even though some may not be Muslim. Never the less they are grouped into this specific category that coincides with negative connotations and stereotypes (Selod, 2015).

Islamophobia has now become synonymous with America culture through various outlets. According to Chao (2015), news pundits and the internet has led to increased amount of Islamophobia as they constantly report and spread fear through the belief that the United States is under assault by Islam. Chao (2015) looks at the backlash Muslims have faced with in post-9/11 America. Not only have they faced discrimination in the form of verbal abuse, hate crimes and also demonization, as mentioned previously, the internet has jumped onboard and multiple websites have been created that discredits, demonizes and 'informs' the public about Islam (Chao, 2015). In response to the, television producers have tried to push shows that demonstrate how Muslims are just like every other American and not terrorists (Chao, 2015). Programs like these led to criticism and backlash by conservative and Christian groups (Chao, 2015). This demonstrates how Americans view Islam in society and how they are avoiding listening to the argument that they are not terrorists or want to cause harm.

Hall looks at how African-Americans have been stereotyped and portrayed in popular culture. These stereotypes paint them in a negative light and demonstrates the U.S. social hierarchy in which African-Americans are frequently treated as inferior (Hall, 1997). Bonilla-Silva (2015) demonstrated that even though in the twenty-first century with progressive thinking racism is still present and strong, though society does not want to admit it. Also in this new century, in the post 9/11 world, Muslims are being racialized (Selod, 2015; Garner & Selod, 2015). This racialization is reaching new levels as it is turning into suspicion, hatred and fear for those who appear to be Muslim (Selod, 2014; Chao, 2015). This in turn has led to them being



stereotyped as villains and terrorist in American media (Nurullah, 2010; Powell, 2011; Chao, 2015). Though there has been extensive research into the discrimination, struggles and negative portrayal of African-Americans in the United States as they have been (and still are) the victims of the racialized caste system in America, other races however face similar experiences in America, well it is racism to them in person, as a group or demonstrated in popular culture. The stereotyping, particularly the negative stereotypes for this work will mainly be applied to Muslims and Arabs. That being said however, there will be other observations that will be made in regards to race in this work. Whiteness and what it means to be white will also be analyzed, along with whites who do not conform to this aspect (i.e. white terrorists).

The popular culture portrayal of African-Americans in the twentieth century has (and still) gives them a negative image in the United States. There is a conflict however, as the U.S. is trying to step away from its racist history, but it contains racist and prejudicial elements in society through the lens of color blind racism. Society tries to put the past behind them, yet in doing so it is making problems worse as not acknowledging it is just as damaging. Conversely, American popular culture is focusing on a new element, Middle-Easterners with the negative stereotypes that they are radical religious fanatics, with intent to do harm to citizens. This stereotype is not hidden from those who consume this media, but the hidden-messages (color blind racism) may also be present. Therefore it will be important to look for the obvious as well as the obscure.

### *Research Questions*

The literature on the subjects of assassination, race and race in popular culture work into the key questions of this work, as this work covers all three aspects and they are the topic of the research questions. The questions that are to be asked are first; how are Muslims portrayed in

contemporary works that feature assassination. Secondly; how are figures in these popular culture pieces constructed in regards to race, gender, ethnicity and religion? Lastly, can the portrayal of Muslims in these contemporary fictional works that portray assassination be explained using theories of racial stereotyping? The examination of these popular culture elements, combined with analysis will answer these questions that have been presented.

### *Plan of the project*

This project has multiple layers; one layer is looking at the use of assassination, a policy that has been embraced by the United States and currently being utilized. The other layer is race and representation. Many who fall victim to this policy are Muslims, though some are indeed terrorists who have done heinous acts, others may be innocent. To coincide with this, Muslims in America face discrimination and racism for what other Muslims (a small minority) have done. This racism and hatred has led to stereotyping in American popular culture. This leads to the last layer; American popular culture. The purpose of this work is to look at how Muslims are portrayed in American popular culture that feature assassination. Other important aspects that will also be analyzed are how white individuals are portrayed, how the protagonists are portrayed, and how assassination is justified in these works.

The three main elements of popular culture that will be examined are books, films and television series. All of the works then are materials that are readily available to the public such as trade paperback novels, films that have been widely distributed in theaters, and lastly television shows that have been broadcast on major channels and are easily accessible on DVD. All of these materials will have been released between the years of 2003 to 2013, due to various reasons. The first is these works were published in the post-9/11 era, which plays an important role in the plots of most of these works as they deal with the topic of terrorism. This time period

is also important due to the War on Terror and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan which has led to various methods being used to fight these wars, including assassination (Sanders, 2014). Along with this, one of the most high profile killing also took place between those years in 2011 which was the assassination of Osama Bin-Laden (Sanders, 2014) Though works will continue to look at assassination and the War on Terror, the years between 2003 and 2013 were filled with immense conflict and controversy in regards to terrorism.

The first popular culture element (chapter 2) that will be looked at is books, specifically trade paperback novels that are part of the political thriller genre. Though there are a vast number of authors who have written in this genre in the time period specified the case has been narrowed down to six books in total. These six books are not written by six different authors, three of them are by Vince Flynn, two are by Brad Thor and the final one is by Daniel Silva. The reason for these books by these particular authors is that the authors are well known in political thriller genre as bestselling authors and their books have been bestsellers (Cowles, 2016; Garner, 2008; Vitello, 2013). Some of these books specifically have been number one bestsellers, others have not, however they all do have the topic of political assassination as a central theme.

The first author whose books will be analyzed will be Vince Flynn, starting with his 2010 bestselling book *American Assassin*. The main reason this book was chosen was because of its content, but also due to the fact that this book received critical acclaim and was featured in many top 10 lists (Minzesheimer, 2013). In this novel, an individual named Mitch Rapp is recruited by the CIA to join a special unit whose mission is to kill terrorists (Flynn, 2010). Though the book takes place in the early 1990's before the global war on terror, the targets of the assassination are radical Islamic terrorists who are claimed to be responsible for the Pan Am Lockerbie attack (Flynn, 2010). There is also a personal reason for Rapp as he is seeking retribution due to the fact

that his girlfriend was among the victims (Flynn, 2010). The retribution factor, on both the protagonist's part and the government's effort to combat terrorism after the attack fits into the justification aspect for the use of assassination along with the fact that most of those assassinated in the novel are Muslim. There are also cases in this novel where white individuals are killed (Flynn, 2010). These cases will also be analyzed in a racialization context.

The next book by Flynn that will be analyzed is his 2004 book *Memorial Day*. This book was also a bestselling novel and is considered to be one of his best works (Wright, 2013; Minzesheimer, 2013). The plot follows Rapp in an effort to prevent a nuclear weapon from being detonated in the US (Flynn, 2004). The use of assassination is liberally used in this novel as a way to prevent the nuclear weapon from being detonated, but is also used as a way of coercion during an interrogation (Flynn, 2004). This novel is important due to the fact that it brings in a unique 'justification' for the use of assassination. Also there is the fact that the main antagonist along with others happen to be Muslim (Flynn, 2004). The final book by Flynn to be examined is his 2009 novel *Pursuit of Honor* which was also a bestseller (Vitello, 2013). In this thriller Rapp is facing off against a radical Islamist cell that launched a terrorist attack inside the United States (Flynn, 2009). Assassination is used extensively in this novel and the rationale for its use is the War on Terrorism, the use of brutal methods by radical Islamic terrorism as well as retribution for the attack in the United States (Flynn, 2009). Again this demonstrates its use and rationale for utilizing assassination and the racialization aspect.

The next author whose work will be looked at is Brad Thor. The first work by him is his 2007 novel *The First Commandment* in which the series protagonist, counter-terrorism agent Scot Harvath needs to track down and find an assassin who is targeting Harvath and his loved ones (Thor, 2007). It is revealed that this assassin is of Middle-Eastern origin (Thor, 2007).

Assassination occurs in this novel from the antagonist and the protagonist as indiscriminate killing based on revenge is the central theme (Thor, 2007). Though this book was not a best seller, the plot line is important and features assassination. Along with that Thor is also a recognized as a significant author in the fields whose works have received acclaim and have generated significant sales and popularity (Garner, 2008).

The second book by Thor is the 2008 release *The Last Patriot* which Harvath appears again, this time to stop a global conspiracy in which radical groups are silencing individuals through assassination (Thor, 2008). Not only do the antagonists engage in assassination but the protagonist does as well as a way to prevent future deaths (Thor, 2008). Members of the antagonist group are Muslim along with white individuals (Thor, 2008). Both of these will be analyzed through a racialization lens. This novel was a number one bestseller upon its release, so that it factored in plus its subject matter (Garner, 2008). Thor's novels present assassination in a similar way as Flynn's however there are unique plotlines and reasons as to why assassination is conducted along with the racialization component.

The final author whose novel will be examined is Daniel Silva which is his 2005 release *Prince of Fire*. *The Prince of Fire* was on bestseller lists and received good reviews (Nicholson, 2005). In this thriller an Israeli agent named Gabriel Allon is tasked with finding and eliminating terrorists who are behind bombing attacks throughout Europe (Silva, 2005). This novel is beneficial in not only clearly presenting assassination but there will be clear reason as to why the assassination has been carried (i.e. the justification). Also this novel feature Muslim antagonists.

One major element of American popular culture is films, which can cover a wide variety of topics and themes. Films will cover the third chapter of this thesis. Assassination is not excluded from these topics as there have been various films that portray it. For this study, three

well reviewed and notable films will be analyzed. The first is the 2012 film *Zero Dark Thirty* written by Mark Boal and directed by Katherine Bigelow. This film was well received by critics and was nominated for multiple awards (French, 2013; Orr, 2013). The film focuses on the CIA's hunt for the infamous Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin-Laden (Boal & Bigelow, 2012).

Though assassination is not portrayed throughout the whole film, it is important during the end of the film, when it features the US Special Operations team killing Bin-Laden (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). The film's portrayal of the assassination as well as the main plot of the whole film is critical when looking at the topic of assassination. As for the issue of justification, the central theme of the film is the effort to find Bin Laden, the man who was responsible for the 9/11 attacks and the goal is to punish him for his actions.

The second film based on another true event in history, this time it deals with Israel instead of the United States. Steven Spielberg's 2005 film *Munich* looks at Mossad's response to the 1972 Munich massacre during the summer Olympics in which a Palestinian terrorist organization executed Israeli athletes (Spielberg, Kushner & Roth, 2005). Israel's response to the act was to send an Israeli assassination squad to eliminate the masterminds behind the attack (Spielberg et al, 2005). This film not only does an exceptional job of portraying assassination but also gives a justification for the act, whether it is inherently right or wrong can be debated and will be explored. Though the film was controversial due to its subject matter and topic it was well received (Dargis, 2005; Nathan, 2006).

The final film that will be examined is the 2005 film *Syriana* written and directed by Stephen Gaghan. This film features various storylines that are interconnected to the oil industry and one of them features a plot line involving the assassination of an individual who is reported to be behind illicit arms dealing (Gaghan, 2005). In actuality the reason for the assassination is

complex issue and is related to the oil industry and its influence (Gaghan, 2005). Though this film has assassination as one part of a diverse and interconnected storyline and its importance in the film should be analyzed as it plays a significant role, along with the fact that the individual assassinated is Arabic. This film also received praise for its subject matter and unique storyline (Scott, 2005; Kennedy, 2006). The reason for choosing these films is that assassination is a key component to the plotline (or the plotline itself) and the fact that these films have been favorably reviewed.

The fourth chapter and final popular culture piece to be analyzed is television shows that have assassination as a main storyline or subplot in an episode. Two series will be analyzed with various episodes taken from these shows. The first show that will be analyzed is a show titled *The Unit* which is a fictional show about a US Special Operations team (Ryan, 2006). There are episodes in this show in which this team has a mission to assassinate individuals. The first episode to be examined is titled “Non-Permissive Environment” in which an individual is assassinated in the beginning of the show; however the assassination was called off immediately before the act took place, and it still occurred (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Though it happens in the beginning the act itself and the justification as to why it was carried out is explained (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Another episode in the show titled “Extreme Rendition” involves this team breaking an individual out of prison so he can assist in assassinating an arms dealer (Watson & O’Hara, 2006). Though the assassination occurs off-screen it is a major part of the episode and is important to the plot (Watson & O’Hara, 2006). The reason for selecting this show is that it was well received for its realism in regards to how the US military utilizes special operation teams to engage in confidential (and questionable) warfare (Walker, 2012). Though assassinations do not occur in every episode there are episodes

where it encompasses a majority of the plotline and therefore need to be analyzed.

The final show to be examined is entitled *Strike Back* which is produced by Andy Harries and one episode will be examined. It follows a similar premise as *The Unit* in which it features characters whose main mission is to prevent terrorist acts and go after those responsible (Harries, 2010). The episode which will be examined is titled “Project Dawn #4” in which the main characters are pursuing a terrorist who is attempting to gain access to weapons of mass destruction (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). The mission goes wrong with one of the members of the team gets killed by the terrorist who then escapes (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Upset about this the surviving members later find this individual a while, who is not engaging in any illicit behavior at the time, and execute him (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Due to this, there will be heavy analysis on their race (whiteness or lack thereof) along with their actions and how it goes against the norm. This show was originally broadcast in the United Kingdom, but due to its popularity and theme, it was then broadcast in the United States to much acclaim and positive response (Hale, 2011; Ryan, 2015). Though the killing in this episode appear to be complex and difficult to judge, it will be analyzed under the scope of what constitutes an assassination, as there are many definitions set forth.

#### *Expected outcomes/contributions*

As this project has a variety of different themes in regards to assassination, mainly justification and race, there will be a variety of elements that the readers will take away from this work. First and importantly, it will bring more attention to the topic of assassination, particularly as it is becoming more of an issue on the global scale in regards to the United States and its allies in the War on Terror. As this policy is heavily criticized by the international community it is important to look at how it has become an element in American popular culture, which will help



demonstrate the normalization. The second part that readers will learn about this is that popular culture and the normalization of assassination in these works lead to excuses and justification, that is, these works provide illicit examples that justify reasons for assassination. This is important as it is justifying illegal acts and though these works are fictional; assassination occurs in real life with real justification and it is important to make a connection

Lastly there is the notion of race and this is a central component of this work. A majority of those who are assassinated in these works are of Middle-Eastern descent and/or Muslim. The racialization of these individuals in fiction is important. The stereotypes and demonization of Arabs and Muslims in reality have been transferred to fiction, and since these fictional works are elements of popular cultural, it helps reinforce the negative stereotypes as mass amounts of individuals are consuming this media. This transference is a critical component of this work and it will help demonstrate to the readers that assassination in popular culture elements has a racially motivated theme along with a theme of justification in American society.

## **CHAPTER 2: NOVELS THAT PORTRAY ASSASSINATION**

### **INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2**

Though one would not think immediately that novels present the most evidence in regards to race and ethnicity portrayals of Middle-Easterners and terrorism, however there is a large amount of fictional novels that portray this. It would be possible to conduct a thesis solely on fictional novels and the way they portray race in regards to assassination however, this work was created under a wider lens to look at different elements of popular culture. That being said, this chapter will be the longest as the novels contain a substantial amount of evidence for the analysis. The six works that will be analyzed will follow a similar theme; a white (one is Israeli however his 'whiteness' will be analyzed) male member of a Western government agency who must battle terrorists who are mostly Middle-Easterners as well as devout Muslims. There will be examples in which the antagonists are non-Middle Eastern/non-Muslim which will be analyzed as those examples are important.

### **ANALYSIS OF *AMERICAN ASSASSIN* BY VINCE FLYNN**

#### *Introduction to novel*

Vince Flynn's 2010 novel *American Assassin* follows protagonist Mitch Rapp from his training at CIA to them utilizing him as an assassin against radical Islamist terrorist and their supporters. This work by Flynn is one of three that will be analyzed, and the purpose of this book is not only the topic (as the title states), but also the fact that was a bestseller and widely acclaimed, which makes it a form of popular culture. (Minzesheimer, 2013). The novel takes place in the early 1990's and begins with Rapp being recruited into the CIA by an analyst named Irene Kennedy to try out for special team that has the main goal of finding and killing Islamist radicals (Flynn, 2010). He goes through a brutal selection process under the supervision of

veteran CIA assassin Stan Hurley, passes the selection and is then allowed to conduct operations under the command of Hurley (Flynn, 2010). This leads to him committing assassinations in Turkey and Beirut (Flynn, 2010). There are two themes that will be analyzed in relation to this text; race and ethnicity and justification for assassination

### *Race and ethnicity analysis*

The topic of race and ethnicity is a major component in this in novel. In some ways it is a major component of the novel as a whole, and in other ways it is subtle. The race of Mitch Rapp is discussed in the prologue of the novel, three pages in, “Rapp eyed his fractured reflection; his thick uncombed head of black hair and beard, his bronzed olive skin and his eyes, so dark that they were almost black. He could walk among the enemy without attracting so much as a suspicious glance, but that would all change if he didn’t do something” (Flynn, 2010, pp. 10). An in-depth analysis of the ‘enemy’ portion of this will be discussed later on in this section as Rapp is the main element of analysis for the moment. Rapp’s main goal in this novel is to stop an Arabic terrorist through lethal means, while encountering others who he will also kill, most will be Arabic and Middle-Eastern and one will not (Flynn, 2010). In many ways there is a paradox of Rapp in regards to his race and nationality. His skin is dark, but is referred as bronzed olive, yet his nationality is American (Flynn, 2010). The color of his skin allows him to blend into areas where there are other individuals with a similar skin tone, like Beirut and Turkey, the areas where he conducts his operations (Flynn, 2010). He also works for the United States government as an assassin and feels that it is his duty to take on this role (among other motives which will be discussed later) (Flynn, 2010). It appears that the American portion of him overshadows his skin color, as the skin color is used more as a tool for Rapp to complete his goal, rather than as a way of defining who he is in total.

Though Rapp is the main protagonist, there are secondary protagonists in the novel and their race is also important. Rapp's mentor, Stan Hurley is a male, who also works as an assassin for the CIA (Flynn, 2010). The book refers to Hurley as having a dark skin tone, "His skin was a leathery, dark brown and all of it, even his cheeks, seemed tightly wound with muscles and tendons (Flynn, 2010, pp. 18). Though his skin is dark, (and the book does not necessarily state is race, but instead his background), it is possible to assume his skin color offers the same purpose as Rapp's, concealment. The mystique of Hurley and lack of specifically stating his race allows the reader to draw their own conclusions and speculations about Hurley's race, however what does come to mind is a tan white male, and his 'whiteness' is represented.

Throughout the book, it is mentioned that Hurley grew up in the mid-west area of the US and worked with the CIA in Europe in the 1950's and 60's, Latin America and the Middle East in the 80's (Flynn, 2010). It could be assumed that his skin color got darker over time due to his time in these countries. Along with this, Hurley maintains a high level of Americanism in his behavior and demeanor. He mentions in various points that he does what he does for the safety and security of America (Flynn, 2010). Though like Rapp his literal skin tone is debatable, yet his values and behavior could be considered a 'white American' though as mentioned it is not stated but assumed.

Race plays a factor in other secondary protagonists as well. The individual who recruits Rapp, Irene Kennedy is also white, as is the head of the CIA, Thomas Stansfield (Flynn, 2010). Though there are other secondary characters, these three are the most significant in the story, and not only are they all white, but they are also obviously American (Flynn, 2010). These individuals are also the protagonists, the good guys who are doing their duty for America to combat the threat of terrorism. This reinforces the notion that to be American and also be white

synonymous in many ways. This 'white American' concept is unique, as all of the protagonists mentioned are white (or in Hurley's case given the assumption that they are white), this demonstrates that concept of a 'white American' is not split into two words, race and nationality are intertwined. Race matters in relation to the protagonists of this novel, but is also significant, possibly even more for the antagonists.

The main antagonist Assef Sayyed is Arabic (Flynn, 2010). Two secondary antagonists (though not major in the novel, their roles in assassination are significant for this analysis), are important in regards to their race. These individuals are the Turkish arms dealer, Hamdi Sharif and the German banker Hans Dorfman (Flynn, 2010). Now though it has been mentioned that Rapp is indeed olive skinned, I am going to distinguish the differences between him and the antagonists. Yes Rapp is olive skinned, but he also maintains the American identity of that of a white male, his actually skin color only matters as a way of blending in, while he truly takes on the persona of that of a white male.

How race relates to the primary antagonists is a subtle, yet important factor in this novel. It takes place before September 11, 2001 when the world was not yet fixated on the issue of Radical Islamic terrorism. In this novel however, it is mentioned as a serious issue, "Stan, these Islamists aren't going away." "I've been telling you that for ten years." "Looking at the big picture, they've been a minor irritation until now, but I sense something bigger. They are organizing and morphing and spreading like a virus" (Flynn, 2010, pp. 144-145). The issue of Islamic terrorism in this time period was something that the United States had experienced; such as the Lockerbie bombing and bombings in Beirut which killed Americans, both which really did occur in the 1980's and are mentioned in the novel. That being said the U.S. did not really become invested in the issue until after 9/11. Along with this, stating that it is spreading like a

viral infection brings forth an immediate negativity towards Muslims, while not giving credit to the majority who are not terrorists.

Race plays a role in this discussion and throughout the novel as well. They are stating that the threat of radical Islamic terrorism is an issue and they need to counter it. Though radical Islamic terrorism can take many forms in regards to race, this novel presents it in a way in which the enemy is an Arabic individual. As mentioned, the main antagonist is Sayyed who receives the main focus. Though Sayyed is not killed in this novel, his presence as a menacing and evil figure is omnipresent (Flynn, 2010). When Sayyed is first introduced, he is described as being a ruthless, “Samir jerked his thumb toward the backseat and watched the guard’s eyes open as he recognized the ruthless Assef Sayyed” (Flynn, 2010, pp. 68). Though it is not revealed in this portion, later on it is revealed that he is also Muslim as well (Flynn, 2010). As for a demonstration of Sayyed’s ruthlessness, he was the individual who conducted the ‘interrogation’ of the American CIA agent by ripping his fingernails out with a pair of pliers (Flynn, 2010). It is also later revealed that this method is his favorite along with electrocution (Flynn, 2010). The fact that Sayyed is one of the few Arabs in the book, and is the primary antagonist says a lot. The issue of Islamic Arabic radicals is mentioned many times, however peaceful non-radical one are not given attention. This creates an interesting component, as the main antagonist fit these categories and demonstrates a high level of brutality.

Sayyed is the main antagonist in the book but as stated it is unclear whether or not he is killed. The opposite can be said about Hamdi Sharif and Hans Dorfman and race is a factor in both of their deaths (their killing will also be mentioned in the justification analysis as well). Hamdi Sharif is a Turkish arms dealer responsible for supplying weapons to terrorist organizations and Rapp is given the order to kill him, which he does (Flynn, 2010). Sharif is

mentioned as being a Turkish Muslim (Flynn, 2010). Though his actual race and skin color is not noted, it is possible that the reader may make assumptions. Obviously he is portrayed as being an evil individual due to his activities and the fact that he contributes to terrorist activities and is therefore responsible (Flynn, 2010). Still his religion, proximity and relationship with terrorist groups gives hint to his race via assumption, which is similar to how Sayyed is portrayed; an evil Muslim who is a terrorist.

The last individual to be examined is German banker Hans Dorfman. Now unlike Sayyed Hans is a white individual, however it also makes it an interesting component for the analysis. Sayyed is described as a barbaric individual, but when Dorfman is mentioned he is portrayed as being worse than the terrorist according to Stan Hurley,

“Richards was still looking at the photo of the banker. “Stan, are you trying to tell us this guy isn’t guilty?” “This guy?” Hurley waved his right hand from one side of the table to the other. “Hell no. This Nazi piece of shit is guilty as hell. In fact, guys like this piss me off more than the ones who shoot back. This prick lives in is fancy house, takes two months off every year, goes to the nicest places, and sleeps like a fucking baby every night. He thinks it’s no big deal that he helps these scumbags move their money around. No,” he shook his head, “this is one of those times when I will enjoy pulling the trigger” (Flynn, 2010, pp. 246).

In this scenario, though Dorfman is white, he is described as being even worse than terrorists due to the fact that he does not directly kill people, but is financially complicit and enjoys luxuries others do not. In this regards, Dorfman is betraying his own race and the concept of whiteness; not only is betraying his race to support terrorists but he is also capitalizing off it. This is demonstrated in how the terrorists live in the novel, as most of their activities take place

in war-torn Beirut, Lebanon (Flynn, 2010). Hurley also mentions that the those who they are battling against shoot back, and though there is animosity, it seems that in Hurley's mind he has a little bit of respect from them, no matter how ruthless.

### *Justification and portrayal of assassination*

The justification for assassination is a frequent occurrence in this novel, in regards to both the U.S. government, CIA and for protagonist Mitch Rapp. Rapp has his own motivations, while the US government and CIA have different ones; however both coincide with one another. The CIA is tasked with recruiting and sending non-official agents to kill Islamic radicals and their supporters, because as stated previously, they were growing and becoming brazen in their efforts (Flynn, 2010). Rapp's motivation is much more personal, he wants to be utilized by the government to radicals Islamists due to their involvement in the bombing of the Pan Am Lockerbie attack in which is girlfriend was killed (Flynn, 2010). His motivation is played out in a conversation with psychologist Tom Lewis when asked if the purpose is revenge, though Rapp does not believe revenge is the perfect word,

“Revenge is more wild, less calculated... deeply personal.” “And retribution?” Rapp thought about it for a moment and then answered in a very clear voice. “Retribution is a punishment that is morally right and fully deserved.” “And the men who conspired to bring down Pan Am 103?” “Rapp leaned forward, placing his elbows on his knees, and said, “Every last one of them deserves to die” (Flynn, 2010, pp. 110).

Using the term retribution instead of revenge as well as stating his definition between the two is important here, yes there is a difference between them, but in this scenario is there really? Rapp believes that killing terrorists is morally right, that they engage in barbarous acts that kill



innocent civilians and therefore should be killed. At the same time however, Rapp has personal reasons as to why he feels terrorists should be killed versus other legal non-lethal means.

The justification for assassination overall has observed, however there are two individual cases in this novel in which characters are assassinated. The first to be killed is Hamdi Sharif, and as stated he was an arms dealer (Flynn, 2010). This is in fact the reason why he was targeted for assassination, he deals to terrorist organizations and they in turn use them on civilians which in some ways makes him culpable for those deaths (Flynn 2010). Rapp takes this one step further however as he is the one who has been ordered to kill him (Flynn, 2010). Rapp disregards orders from his superiors to wait and immediately kills Sharif by shooting him in the head (Flynn, 2010). Rapp makes it personal because Sharif was responsible for selling the explosives that took down the plane his girlfriend was on (Flynn, 2010). Though the CIA and US had ordered the assassination and justify due to the fact that he was selling weapons, Rapp justifies the killing in his own mind in a way that goes beyond the government's justification, that it was a personal vendetta.

Though an arms dealer is committing serious crimes does that necessarily justify assassination? When looking at a fictionalized case like Sharif's, there are obviously many questions to consider in a scenario like this. For example one could ask the question, at what point would it be appropriate to assassinate a seller of illegal weapons? What would that individual need to do to warrant his or life being taken? It is important to think of this question due to the fact that though it is a serious offense, other methods could be used said individual such as arrest and imprisonment.

The second individual who faces assassination is banker Hans Dorfman. The reason for his assassination was explained in the race analysis, that he helps transfer funds that terrorist

organizations use to finance their operations (Flynn, 2010). An interesting scenario plays out before Dorfman is killed. Rapp and Hurley restrain him and threaten to kill his wife so that they can get into his safe to acquire documents and files on his clients (Flynn, 2010). Though they have no intentions to harm his wife, they do make it appear as they will torture and kill her (Flynn, 2010). When Dorfman states that he will not give them what they need they remember that he has an undying love for his animals, when Rapp threatens torture and kill Dorfman's dogs in front of him, he gives in (Flynn, 2010). Before Hurley executes Dorfman, Rapp states something interesting "Dorfman," Rapp said as he pointed his gun at the banker's head. "I bet if those damn terrorists were running around killing dogs you would have thought twice about helping them" (Flynn, 2010, pp. 260). This is an interesting scenario and speaks to a type of unofficial justification; Dorfman has no sympathy or remorse for human life, the only thing he cares about is his dogs. He did not even give in when they threatened to harm his wife, but when his dogs were at risk he gave in (Flynn, 2010). His lack of remorse and twisted sense of caring appears to have played a role in his death partly.

Like the assassination of Sharif, it is equally important to look the Dorfman killing in a non-fiction context. Flynn portrayed Dorfman as an individual without sympathy for human life, whose only crime was helping terrorist move money. Though it is a serious charge, execution seems like an extreme measure to take against a banker. In reality there are those who may assist terrorist in transferring and moving funds (whether knowing or unknowingly), however it could easily be handled by law enforcement agencies in which that individual resides in cooperation with state authorities and if it is in America's interest then federal agencies should be involved to prosecute. Assassination appears to be a rush to judgement in scenarios like this, and though this is a fictional story, the case of Dorfman would most likely not turn out like that.

These two cases in the novel along with the overall plotline portray assassination as something that needs to occur and at the same time (in the case of Rapp) is justified by those who experience tragedy. When looking at the characters of Sharif and Dorfman, they were selected by the government for assassination due to their links to terrorists, though no matter how little their involvement may be in the acts. Lastly and importantly, though the main antagonist, Sayyed was not killed in the novel, he is captured and it is hinted that something may happen to him (Flynn, 2010). It is up to the reader to make his or her assumptions in this matter. Though he was not killed, he was portrayed as a ruthless terrorist and with the topic of justification brought up many times; his assassination would be justified in the context. The assassinations presented however the key components for this analysis are but the presence of Sayyed is important to the story as a whole which is why he was examined.

## **ANALYSIS OF *MEMORIAL DAY* BY VINCE FLYNN**

### *Introduction*

Vince Flynn's 2004 novel *Memorial Day* follows protagonist Mitch Rapp again, as he goes against terrorists bent on attacking the United States. This book is considered to be one of his best by critics, and was also a bestseller (Wright, 2013; Minzesheimer, 2013). After Rapp and a US special operations team raid a terrorist stronghold in Afghanistan, they discover that members are planning on attacking the United States with a nuclear weapon (Flynn, 2004). To prevent the attack, Rapp must use questionable methods to get information on those behind it and as a way to stop those individuals from carrying it out (Flynn, 2004). Though this novel has plenty of dialogue, action and various storylines that contribute to its entertainment factor, there are also multiple cases in which aspects of this novel can be critiqued and analyzed in regards to race and justification for assassination.

*Race and ethnicity analysis*

Race plays an important role in this novel in regards to both protagonist and antagonist. Like *American Assassin*, Mitch Rapp is still the primary protagonist, though his race has been introduced previously, his symbolism in regards to race is still a key component in this analysis along with the race and ethnicity of the supporting protagonists. Lastly, the race and ethnicity as it relates to the antagonists is equally important, along with the way in which the antagonist interacts with the protagonist. The primary antagonist is an individual named Mustafa Al-Yamani who is a terrorist and also committed Muslim (Flynn, 2004). A second antagonist is Ali Saed al-Houri who is similar to Al-Yamani, in the fact that he is a terrorist and devout Muslim (Flynn, 2004). Al-Houri though a secondary antagonist (and is only present for a short time in the book) he plays an important role in the narrative as he is the first individual assassinated and more importantly is assassinated specifically by Rapp (Flynn, 2004). His death and how his race and religion is connected to it are important.

The conversation, interrogation and eventual assassination of Al-Houri, as a means of eliminating him, yet also as a means to frighten another individual who was captured with him into giving up information related to potential terrorist attack (Flynn, 2004). It is in this interrogation in which Rapp tries to antagonize Al-Houri into cooperating by using his religion against him “Having looked forward to this day for some time Rapp studied the grizzled face and said, “Ali Saed al-Houri, I have the *Sijjin* and your name is on it.” The *Sijjin* was a scroll where the names of all those who will be sent to hell are recorded” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 144-145). This causes al-Houri to react hostilely, which also brings up a debate

“You are a liar,” al-Houri yelled in Arabic. “You are not even a true believer. You are nothing more than an assassin” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 145). The conversation goes further into

the realm of religion, mainly “I am not a liar,” Rapp replied without malice. “Allah does not hold in favor men who kill innocent women and children. Your name is on the list, and I am here to send you to hell.” Al-Houri laughed in Rapp’s face. The tide is turning. We are about to strike a great blow for Allah, and you will pay dearly” (Flynn, 2005, pp. 145).

This conversation brings up an interesting point in regards to the realm of good versus evil. Both men are in fact believers in what they are doing. Rapp’s job is to eliminate terrorists, who he views as evil, al-Houri is devout in his religion and though he is a terrorist, he calls Rapp out in the fact that he kills people. Though Rapp’s job is to kill, he is portrayed as doing it for a noble and just cause.

Al-Houri is portrayed as having an immense resolve and that of a true believer, not only in his religion but also his devotion to terror, an aspect that is pointed out, “No matter what Rapp said to al-Houri, his faith and confidence in his chosen path would remain unshaken. This made him dangerous. His conviction would give the others strength. He had to be removed to get the rest to talk” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 146). It is at this point where Rapp executes al-Houri by shooting him in the back of the head (Flynn, 2004). Afterwards there is a justification in the action beyond intimidating the other prisoners,

“As Rapp looked down at him he didn’t feel the slightest bit of regret or guilt. Al-Houri was one of the organizers of the worst terrorist attack in history. He had cheered and gloated over the deaths of 3,000 peaceful men and women, and he was planning to kill thousands more. He was a vile and demented religious zealot, deserving of the bullet that had just ripped a large portion of his brain from his head” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 147).

It is clear that al-Houri is an evil individual; however the execution and following

description of lack of remorse shed light on some things. Al-Houri is devout in religion and used it as a justification for his actions. Though Flynn does attempt to make a distinguished difference at first, by putting al-Houri in the level of extremist, there is still a connection. Al-Houri is not solely portrayed a terrorist, but instead a devout and psychopathic Muslim terrorist. Though the religious component should be separate, the rhetoric makes the two symbiotic.

The central antagonist, Mustafa Al-Yamani is similar to Al-Houri in his devotion and terroristic ideals. Al-Yamani is devout in his religion as well as his cause, going so far as exposing himself to the nuclear material of the bomb he is planning to use to attack the U.S. (Flynn, 2004). His religious devotion coincides with his motivation for attacking the U.S. as he is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice of martyrdom “Al-Yamani’s days were numbered. He too had been exposed to lethal levels of radiation, but not to the extent of his brave mujahedeen. He took pills that helped fight off nausea and fever, but there was no cure. Mustafa al-Yamani was a dead man walking, but he had just enough life in him to strike a glorious blow for Islam” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 109). As the story progresses (and as the radiation sets in) al-Yamani is still focused on his mission, martyrdom and religious ideals, “A few days of agony were nothing when compared to the struggle of his people. He was on a crusade, a continuation of the thousand-year-old battle between the Arab people and the infidels. Never at any time in history had so much been at stake. It was time to ignite a true global Jihad and show the other believers that America could be brought to her knees” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 379). Though al-Yamani is religious, he is not blinded by it, he demonstrates a degree of cunningness.

Al-Yamani is not portrayed as reckless, instead he is calculated and methodical in his actions as he studied his target for weaknesses, “America was a large country with more shoreline than it could realistically defend. It was the Great Satan’s one glaring weakness, and al-

Yamani was planning to exploit it in every phase of his operation” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 109).

Mustafa al-Yamani is also quick at adapting, when the initial target of his bomb is discovered he quickly finds another target that will suffice (Flynn, 2004). This speaks to his motivation and tenacity but it could also speak to his portrayal as an antagonist.

The portrayal of al-Yamani as the devout Muslim terrorist but also an extremely resourceful terrorist who has access to a nuclear device says a lot about him as well as the fears that plague America. The attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> brought up fears of vulnerability and also revealed radical Islamic terrorism to the public. The fictional character of al-Yamani displays classical and modern fears in the American psyche. The fear of nuclear devices being used in America and killing its civilians is as old as the beginning of the cold war, when the biggest threat was the Soviet Union and communists. A real fear; as the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons and the Cuban missile crisis brought the world close to conflict. At the time the Soviet Union was the “enemy” and the worry was there. The fear of nuclear attack and the face of it has been transferred from the Soviet Union and communists to radical Islamists terrorist. Yes it is a fear, however there have been no instances of them using nuclear weapons. Al-Yamani is the fictional face of this fear, a radical Islamic terrorist bent on the destruction of America who is also resourceful, one the biggest fears, but also something that is highly unlikely. That being said, the radical Islamic terrorist has taken over that of the Soviet Union; the enemy of America.

### *Justification and portrayal of assassination*

The first portrayal of assassination has been touched upon, the execution of Ali Saed al-Houri. There are many instances in which this is an assassination. In the scenario al-Houri is a prisoner of Rapp and has already been searched, he is essentially unarmed and not dangerous to Rapp or others (Flynn, 2004). Under the laws of war he would not be considered an armed

combatant (Arnold, 2013; Sanders, 2014). As mentioned previously, Rapp had antagonized al-Houri as a way to get information out him and to intimidate the other prisoners with al-Houri (Flynn, 2004). When the interrogation is unsuccessful, Rapp executes al-Houri (Flynn, 2004). The justification (from Rapp's perspective) was two-fold, first it had to done to get the others to talk as al-Houri's resolve was dangerous and his removal would help, and secondly he was a high-level Al-Queda member who had been behind attacks that killed innocent civilians (Flynn, 2004). Though these are Rapp's justifications, they are far-fetched and illegal; the actions he committed would not be remotely justifiable in reality, even with the issues of legality with current U.S. policy.

Mustafa al-Yamani's death is more straightforward than al-Houri's but still fits in the realm of assassination. As al-Yamani is attempting to set off the nuclear device via a boat, he is being pursued by Rapp via a helicopter (Flynn, 2004). When Rapp notices al-Yamani he kills him,

“The man, who was tall and dark-skinned with short black hair, turned and looked directly at Rapp. In that fraction of a second, the man did something that was entirely unexpected in the situation. He smiled. Rapp had his weapon pulled firmly against his left shoulder and at the very first hint of the smirk he squeezed the trigger in less than a half second” (Flynn, 2004, pp. 537).

Like al-Houri, al-Yamani was yet again unarmed at the moment. Though he was in possession of a nuclear device and intent on using there could have been other options available as he was on a boat. The plot line appears to be constructed in a way in which al-Yamani needed to die, whether he was unarmed. Throughout the novel is portrayed as a cunning individual bent on harming America and its citizens. Yes he was an evil individual however death in this plotline



appears to be required, as he is a terrorist. For the narrative it appears that the evil antagonist must be killed and the protagonist needs to kill him, no matter the legality behind it.

## **ANALYSIS OF *PURSUIT OF HONOR* BY VINCE FLYNN**

### *Introduction*

The last Vince Flynn novel to be analyzed is his 2009 novel *Pursuit of Honor* which again sees the return of Mitch Rapp. This book like the others was a best seller among fans (Vitello, 2013). In this novel Rapp is ordered to find and eliminate terrorists behind an attack that killed hundreds of U.S. citizens as well as politicians (Flynn, 2009). This manhunt leads to conflict within the United States government as there are individuals who are against the actions Rapp has committed in the past, and who feel as though he has too much authority and is reckless (Flynn, 2009). At the same time, the individuals behind the attacks Hakim and Karim are evading the authorities and CIA (Flynn, 2009). Karim however gets increasingly brutal and reckless which lead Hakim to question the mission and the extremism element of his faith (Flynn, 2009). Along with this, there is an individual who aided the terrorists who is American named Glen Adams. The race of those involved as well as Rapp's motivations are key components.

### *Race and ethnicity analysis*

Though the main portion of this analysis will be directed toward the antagonists of Karim and Hakim, there is a secondary protagonist, Mike Nash, who will be analyzed. Rapp will not be heavily analyzed as he has been looked at twice, but his actions will be thoroughly examined. Nash in this case, though secondary is still an important character of the story. He is a former Marine who works for the CIA and alongside Rapp, and though he is similar to Rapp he is also

different in many respects. Rapp has no significant others while Nash has a wife and three children (Flynn, 2009). Nash also feels more guilt and stress over his job when compared to Rapp (Flynn, 2009). Nash is portrayed as the loving family man and as a war hero; which can be considered extremely American in the traditional sense. That being said however his job requires him to find and eliminate terrorists, which that troubles him at points.

After interrogating Glen Adams, an American citizen who supported the terrorists earlier in the day (an individual who will be discussed later), Nash broke down to Rapp, “Staring out the side window at the passing trees, Nash asked, “What in the hell are we doing?” Rapp merged onto the parkway and said “You’re going to have to be a bit more specific, spot.” “This.” Nash made groping gestures with his hands, “This crap... last night and this morning” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 113). The conversation turns into a discussion about killing individuals who are ‘combatants’ in the Middle-East versus American citizens who aid terrorists, as Nash has a hard time facing this,

“Nash spoke with exaggerated clarity, “that I’m not a cold-blooded killer.” “That’s interesting... because I’d swear I saw you pop a few guys when we were over in the Kush.” Rapp was referring to the operations they’d run in Afghanistan. “That’s different.” “How so?” “They were the enemy.” “And what would you call this guy... our ally?” “How about a fellow American?” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 113-114).

Rapp begins to berate Nash on the parameters of their job and the oath they took, “Threats both foreign and domestic,” Rapp said, quoting the oath they’d both taken. “Everyone likes to forget about the domestic part. Just because you’re an American doesn’t automatically make you one of the good guys” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 114). This conversation brings up various points.

Before continuing it is important to look at how Glen Adams plays into the novel. Adams is an American citizen who works for the government and leaked information that gave aid to the terrorist Hakim and Karim (Flynn, 2009). He is captured by Rapp after meeting with a lawyer while planning to publish a book about the CIA (and Rapp's) involvement in torture and assassination (Flynn, 2009). While interrogated by Rapp, Nash and their mentor Stan Hurley, while being interrogated (forcefully) Adams attempts to explain his justification,

“Almost two hundred of your countrymen were killed last week, and you’re out trying to get rich off it.” “That’s a lie and you know it,” Adams spat. “You two are the problem... not me. You are why they hate us, not me.” Hurley smacked him across the head and yelled, “You’re a fucking embarrassment to your family” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 81).

Though Adams makes a point that individuals like Rapp and Hurley are assassins, his justification does not fit the narrative. Though he is not killed, his interrogation and treatment portrays him as being just as bad, if not worse, than the terrorists as he is betraying his country and that of the American identity.

The terrorists Hakim and Karim bring forth a unique analysis. Though both are responsible for the attacks Hakim feels guilt and clashes with Karim as the story progresses (Flynn, 2009). Both are devout Muslims, however Karim embraces radical Islam, follows the teachings intensely and has strong anti-American sentiments, while Hakim, though embraces Islam heavily also has a love for American literature (Flynn, 2009). This causes conflict early on in the novel between the two,

“Any news?” Karim asked, pointing at the small tv on the table. “I did not turn it on.”

“Reading again?” “Yes.” “Those same blasphemous American books you read when we were kids?” Karim asked with an edge of disapproval. “I would hardly call *For Whom the*

*Bell Tolls* a blasphemous novel.” “Do you think Imam bin Abdullah would approve?”

Karim asked as he grabbed the remote and turned on the tv” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 24-25).

The conflict between the two comes to a head after Karim becomes paranoid and executes a father and son and the subsequently executes an elderly man and his wife later on; during his Hakim’s questioning over the killings, Karim physically assaults Hakim for defying him (Flynn, 2009). Towards the end of the novel, Hakim is taken into custody by Rapp while Karim is planning to kill Nash; as Nash was commended for his actions during the terror attack orchestrated by Karim, he prevented terrorists from causing more harm and was publically given a medal by the President and praised for his actions (Flynn, 2009). Hakim turns on Karim and gives them information in helping to locate Karim (Flynn, 2009).

The reason for Hakim’s betrayal is due to the fact that he thinks Karim is out of control and extremely self-centered; as well as the fact that he physically assaulted him (Flynn, 2009). At the end of the novel, though Hakim is a terrorist, he redeems himself, to the point where it is decided by Rapp and others that he does not deserve to be killed, “Hakim al Harbi was more complicated. Rapp told Hurley outright he had no stomach for killing the guy” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 500). This is interesting, as though Hakim was a co-conspirator; his actions helped Rapp find and kill Karim, who is frequently portrayed as a sadist. Hakim was constantly at odds with Karim’s excessive violence and how he berated and assaulted him. What is also unique about Hakim was his fondness for American culture. It is this that assisting the Rapp and his cultural interests overshadow his actions; he has become an ally and did the ‘American’ thing, help them in finding the sadist Karim.

Karim on the other hand is the quintessential villain as he shows no remorse and is blinded by his religion. He frequently uses his religion as his justification for his actions, hates

American culture and Americans in general, and shows no limits; executing children and elderly people (Flynn, 2009). Yes, Karim is an evil individual in this novel, but more importantly he is a devout Muslim, who uses his religion to justify his actions. This is paramount, as he frequently discusses his devotion in concurrence with his actions (Flynn, 2009). Though Hakim is Muslim, he brings forth a more 'American' role towards the end and changes; Karim does not. He maintains his Muslim identity and as the novel progresses he gets more brutal.

### *Justification and portrayal of assassination*

Karim and another individual named Ahmed (who works with Karim, but is mentioned briefly and only plays a minor role towards the end) are the only individuals killed and it occurs at the end of the novel. This occurs after Karim kidnaps Mike Nash's daughter; he does so after it is televised that Nash was one of the individuals who killed suicide bombers during the attack orchestrated by Karim (Flynn, 2009). Karim wants to kill Nash as he is aware of Nash's role and for personal glory, and to lure Nash out he kidnaps his daughter (Flynn, 2009). As Nash and Rapp are alerted of this Nash agrees to sacrifice himself in order to save his daughter; Rapp does not allow this and has officers restrain Nash while Rapp and others prepare to kill Karim and Ahmed (Flynn, 2009). The plan succeeds, with a sniper eliminating Ahmed and Rapp personally killing Karim (Flynn, 2009). However the killing of Karim is complex, as Rapp first shot him the chest but that only slightly wounded him,

"Rapp looked back down at Karim who was clutching at his tactical vest. There was no sign of blood. Rapp figured he was wearing a bulletproof vest. Rapp thought about the president and Dickerson and the bullshit show trial that the country would be dragged through. He elevated the thick silencer a few degrees and put the Karim's face in the center of the sight. He was trying to say something, but Rapp didn't really care. He

squeezed the trigger one more time and ended it” (Flynn, 2009, pp. 495).

As with others, though he was disarmed and not an immediate Karim is essentially executed. The reasons given are that Rapp did not want to spare the country going through a trial, however there are other reasons behind this that fir the narrative. Karim’s sadism and his actions require that he be killed. He is the villain in the story and an evil one at that, it is expected that he die. As we have seen previously, the villain needs to die; it as though killing the terrorist is synonymous with the American hero; not taking them alive and trying them for their actions, the individual must die in the narrative.

## **ANALYSIS OF *THE FIRST COMMANDMENT* BY BRAD THOR**

### *Introduction*

Brad Thor’s 2007 novel *The First Commandment* is similar to works like Vince Flynn’s as it features an American counter-terrorism named Scot Harvath agent going against Muslim extremists. In this novel Harvath is out to find an assassin who has been targeting his friends and family, and it is also in relation to an action the U.S. President was forced into; releasing detainees from Guantanamo Bay (Thor, 2007). Eventually it is discovered that one of the detainees who was released is an individual named Phillippe Roussard, an individual born of a Muslim mother and Jewish father and is after Harvath for his involvement in the death of his Muslim family members (Thor, 2007). This novel is quite complex as it explores many themes; assassination, religion, ethnicity and revenge. Roussard’s actions and how they play into his religion and family will be observed, as will Harvath’s actions and his race, and finally the killing of Roussard and his grandfather Ari Schoen, a former Israeli counter terrorism operative (Thor, 2007).

*Race and ethnicity*

The protagonist Scot Harvath will be the first individual who is analyzed. Harvath is a United States counter-terrorism officer who was a former Navy SEAL and Secret Service agent (Thor, 2007). Though his race is not explicitly stated, he is described as having sandy brown hair and blue eyes, giving the assumption that he is white (Thor, 2007). Along with his he has qualities that are American in a sense as previously described, he served in the U.S. military; something that can be viewed as American, and he has continued to serve his country in various ways, all of which create the image of the patriotic American. He is dedicated to his loved ones, particularly in this novel as they are being targeted by Roussard which causes Harvath great pain and also a desire for vengeance (Thor, 2007). He takes his job as counter-terrorist operative seriously, however his drive to find Roussard (who early on he does not know the identity of) leads him to act irrationally at points, but also he maintains his professionalism.

At one point in the novel his impulsiveness causes him to threaten the lives of a former Syrian intelligence operative and his wife. Harvath is looking for one of the individuals who was released from Guantanamo named Abdel Salam Najib and to find him he goes to question an ally of Najib named Tammam Al-Tal (Thor, 2007). Harvath tracks down, restrains, and then interrogates Al-Tal who is reluctant to answer (Thor, 2007). To make Al-Tal talk he brings his wife in restrained and threatens to torture her,

“Some things are worse than being killed,” said Harvath as he removed a small can of Guardian Protective devices OC from his jacket pocket. Attached to the nozzle was a long, clear plastic tube. Grabbing a tight handful of Al-Tal’s wife’s hair, Harvath immobilized her head and shoved the tube into her ear. “Have you ever been exposed to pepper spray, Tammam?” he asked as the woman screamed from behind the duct tape

across her mouth. "Leave her alone," demanded Al-Tal. Harvath ignored him. "The way it burns in your eyes, your nose, your throat?" "I said leave her alone!" "Going in through the ear canal is another experience all together. When I depress this button, a fine, aerosolized mist will rush through this tube and it will feel to your wife as if someone has coated the entire inside of her skull with flaming gasoline." (Thor, 2007, pp. 203).

Harvath does not go through with this, as he gets the information that he needs from Al-Tal on the location of Najib (Thor, 2007). This coercion though not related to assassination or race, speaks to another facet of the War on Terror that is quite synonymous with assassination; torture. It is well known fact that the U.S. military and intelligence services have frequently engaged in torture of Muslim individuals as a way to get information (Danner, 2004). That being said however the results of torture have proven not to be affective (Danner, 2004; Welch, 2010). The reason for adding in this torture section in the race and ethnicity portion is due to the fact that violence and brutality in the War on Terror has become common place and that because of this it has become a part of America. Harvath is displaying this 'American' component and in this novel it works where in actuality it does not, however for the purpose of the novel this has become a major tool used.

Harvath is demonstrating many qualities and values of that of the fictional hero who is battling the current threats that face the nation and world. He is portrayed a patriot a quintessential 'American hero', however he is also conducting himself in a way that some would seem to think the right way to conduct a war is, violence, coercion and impunity. His behavior may be under the guise of duty, patriotism or honor, but his actions are that of a violent man.

The primary antagonist in the novel Philippe Roussard is the opposite of Harvath's American values. While Harvath is a former Navy SEAL and current counter-terrorism agent,



Roussard is a religious fanatic who has a penchant for killing Americans, which is introduced at the beginning of the novel,

“Phillippe Roussard hadn’t been at Guantanamo the longest, but he had definitely been interrogated the hardest. A European of Arab descent, he was a sniper of extraordinary ability whose exploits were legendary. Videos of his kills played on continuous loops on jihadist websites across the internet. To his Muslim brothers he was nothing short of a superhero in the radical Islamist pantheon. To the United States, he was a horrific killing machine responsible for the deaths of over one hundred U.S. soldiers” (Thor, 2007, pp. 1-2).

Roussard’s introduction sets the precedent; the evil Muslim who kills U.S. soldiers and is revered for it. Though that builds the on the evil antagonist component, his religious devotion is demonstrated later on, as he despises American culture for the it is gluttonous ways and he believes he is superior spiritually and morally through his religion (Thor, 2007). Roussard has a vendetta against Harvath (Thor, 2007). Roussard begins by shooting Harvath’s girlfriend Tracy Hastings (who survives but is in a coma for most of the novel), which is what motivates Harvath to find Roussard (Thor, 2007). Roussard then takes his actions towards Harvath even further by physically assaulting Harvath’s mother; effectively hospitalizing her (Thor, 2007). After this is kills Harvath’s former Navy SEAL teammates which further angers Harvath (Thor, 2007) Lastly it is revealed that Roussard plans on killing Harvath’s ex-girlfriend, Meg Cassidy who is engaged to be married (Thor, 2007). It is during Cassidy’s wedding in which Harvath kills Roussard (Thor, 2007).

Roussard’s motivation for killing and attempting to kill Harvath’s loved ones is revealed at the end of the novel; which is complex. Harvath finds a former Israeli counter intelligence

officer named Ari Schoen who says Roussard was born to an Israeli father (Schoen's son) and an Arab mother (Thor, 2007). To make matters more complicated, Roussard's mother was a member of a terrorist organization that was waging attacks against Israel and America; an organization that Harvath helped dismantle and in the process killed Roussard's mother (Thor, 2007).<sup>1</sup> The attacks on Harvath's loved ones as revenge for killing Roussard's mother and Schoen then reveals that he was the one who told Roussard about Harvath's involvement, that he secured Roussard's release from Guantanamo (Thor, 2007). Schoen's motivation for this is so that he could hope to control his grandson and hopefully bond with him as he is the only family Roussard had left (Thor 2007).

Roussard's brutality is based on vengeance; he is angry a Harvath is brutal but he does his actions for his country, Roussard is brutal just for his personal vendetta and is also portrayed as being brutal overall for the sake of being brutal. Along with this there is another observation that can be made in this regard. Roussard is half Israeli and half Arab, yet he only embraces his Arab side; he follows in the footsteps of his mother in her ways of terrorism and is also a devout Muslim. His Israeli heritage is only mentioned from his lineage. In this narrative, it appears that the Israeli side cannot be a factor, as it goes against the traditional narrative. It is common knowledge that the Arab and Israelis are in conflict and have been for decades. Along with this, Israelis most important ally is the United States; in many ways American values in national security and also ethnicity intersect (this connection will be discussed more in-depth in the Daniel Silva analysis as well as the *Munich* analysis, but it is important to briefly mention it in this instance). For Roussard to be the evil man that he is portrayed as he cannot be Israeli, he

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<sup>1</sup> Upon further examination, the introduction of Ari Schoen, the killing of Roussard's mother and the terrorist organization in question takes place during Thor's 2002 novel *The Path of the Assassin*.

must be a Muslim terrorist, being an Israeli terrorist bent on the killing U.S. citizens would be a complicated scenario.

*Portrayal and justification for assassination*

Like the other novels the Muslim antagonist is killed by the hero and the killing of Roussard is similar to that portrayed in Vince Flynn's *Pursuit of Honor*. Roussard is attempting to kill Harvath's ex-girlfriend by attacking the patrons from a boat (Thor, 2007). Harvath intercepts the boat and kills Roussard, but before he physically kills him, the justification portion is given, "There was no mercy in Harvath's heart for this terrorist, this killer of innocent men and women. Roussard was beyond rehabilitation, and Harvath knew the greatest gift he could give the American taxpayers was to prevent Roussard from ever standing trial and living out the next twenty years on appeal after appeal in some prison somewhere" (Thor, 2007, pp.472). Harvath then proceeds attempt to cut Roussard's throat but fails, and instead drowns him in the ocean (Thor, 2007). The argument that Roussard is being killed to spare the sense of trial and imprisonment has been used in Flynn's work as well. Therefore this argument appears to be accepted and a justifiable use of violence in these types of situations. That being said, it really has more to do with the fact that they are eliminating the threat (the Muslim terrorist) and not willing to deal with the other factors. It makes more sense in these types of literature to kill the antagonist, than to let him or her live.

Though Roussard is the primary antagonist throughout the majority of the novel, the secondary antagonist, Ari Schoen is also assassinated (and also revealed to be behind letting Roussard on Harvath. Schoen is killed via a bomb planted in his room that is detonated by an ally of Harvath's after he confronts Schoen and discovers the truth (Thor, 2007). Schoen was not killed by Harvath, but instead an ally of Harvath's named Nicolas (Thor, 2007). It is not fully

clear why Nicolas kills Schoen, however Harvath was against killing Schoen during their meeting, due to the fact the Schoen was already in pain from and suffering from wounds sustained in a terrorist attack years prior; however Harvath does not stop, nor care that Nicolas kills Schoen (Thor, 2007). The killing of Schoen in an analytical way is important. Schoen was revealed to be the mastermind; however he is also the Israeli grandfather to Roussard. His death solves a lot of problems as it eliminates the last threat to Harvath and his allies, but it also speaks to Schoen. As mentioned previously the U.S. and Israel are strong allies; and in the analytical sense of this novel, Schoen is portrayed as someone who has betrayed the Israeli's and Americans. He supported his grandson and gave him the information related to Harvath, he literally and figuratively betrayed his allies and country, and allied with an Arab Muslim. This makes him just as bad as Roussard, possibly worse as he had betrayed his 'true' self.

## **ANALYSIS OF *THE LAST PATRIOT* BY BRAD THOR**

### *Introduction*

Thor's follow up to *The First Commandment* was his 2008 thriller *The Last Patriot* which was also a bestseller (Garner, 2008). The book's plot is interesting (and at points extremely strange that borders on ridiculous). In this novel Harvath is going against Muslim extremists who are aiming to preserve an historical secret; that the prophet Mohammed planned on denouncing violence in Islam and was assassinated for it, a secret that Thomas Jefferson discovered years later, and that Islamic assassins are presently trying to silence all who discover it (Thor, 2008). This novel delves deep into the world of radical Islam and brings up a fictional idea that the radicals are killing to protect their violent ideology (Thor, 2008). This novel obviously has a

variety of racial and ethnic undertones that will be observed, as well as a fair amount of assassinations related to it.

### *Race and ethnicity*

This novel sees the return of Scot Harvath, who though was heavily analyzed in the last novel will continue to be in this section as he demonstrates more white and American qualities. The antagonists in this novel include the assassin Matthew Dodd and the government insider Imad Ramadan. Though both Dodd and Ramadan are Muslim and their race, ethnicity and religion will be examined; a majority of this novel looks at Islam as a whole and specifically the radicalization of Islam component which is important. Since this is a major plotline in the novel it will be examined first and thoroughly.

The overall plot of this novel focuses on how the prophet Mohammed put an element in the Koran that denounced violence in Islam and was assassinated for it; meanwhile Islamic assassins still operate to prevent Mohammed's change from being public (Thor, 2008). Harvath seeks to find the last part of the Koran hidden in a book somewhere while battling the Islamic assassins (Thor, 2008). This novel goes into various elements of Islam, including the peaceful aspects of it, however violence, hatred and terrorism as it relates to Islam is heavily discussed. Early in the novel, a fictional group called Foundation on American Islamic Relations (FAIR) is mentioned, on paper it is to defend against discrimination against Muslims, however some in the U.S. government believe its goal (along with other Muslim groups) is to topple America (Thor, 2008). That being said however, it is in the section in which they mention FAIR, that they also mention an American intelligence agent named Aydin Ozbek, who is Muslim but denounces violence,

“As far as Ozbek was concerned there was nothing “American” about the

Foundation of American Islamic Relations and the word should be stripped of their name. They were an Islamic supremacist organization pure and simple who wanted to see the American government overthrown and replaced with an Islamic one governed by Sharia law. They made him, as well as the overwhelming majority of responsible, law-abiding Muslims in America, sick (Thor, 2008, pp. 34).

This is important, as it looks at both the positive and ‘negatives’ of Islam in America. Yes in reality most are sickened by it and are peaceful; millions of Americans are practitioners of Islam and denounce hate. That being said, the introduction of FAIR and its ‘goals’ for America in this novel are overshadowed by the ‘bad’ segments of Islam in this novel (more on that further), the introduction of the peaceful Muslim appears to be in the novel to save face. It is also important to mention again that Ozbek does work for the U.S. government (he will also be examined further on).

The discussion of Islamists taking over America are mentioned further on when Ozbek is interrogating a FBI agent named Andrew Salam working undercover as an Islamic terrorist (Thor, 2008). During this discussion, Salam tells Ozbek about how the U.S. is becoming more and more Muslim and Ozbek asks Salam if it worries him,

“Of course it does. It should bother every American. And it’s already happening. They have brought about women-only classes and swimming times at taxpayer funded universities and public pools. Christians, Jews, and Hindus have been banned from serving on juries where Muslim defendants are being judged. Piggy banks and Porky Pig tissue dispensers have been banned from workplaces because they offend Islamic sensibilities (Thor, 2008, pp. 87).

The conversation turns into how the Islamic groups are pushing for violence, allowing

violence to occur and hoping to finally institute Sharia-law into the United States (Thor, 2008). This discussion does seem ridiculous and demonstrates a demonization of the Muslim faith; though Ozbek is Muslim and embraces peace, the discussion makes it seem that a majority of Muslims support Sharia law in the U.S., and that the peaceful Muslim is a minority.

Harvath stumbles upon Anthony Nichols, a history professor who works for the President of the U.S. who is evading Islamic assassins (Thor, 2008). He claims that he has found something in Thomas Jefferson's diary that points to the lost sections of the Koran and Mohammed's plea for peace (Thor, 2008). It is later revealed that Mohammed had indeed put a revelation in the Koran stating that he denounced violence against others and encourages his followers to do the same, that peace, not violence is the solution and to maintain peace with other religions and culture (Thor, 2008). As mentioned previously, there are assassins and terrorist bent on keeping this a secret as they want to take control of the Western world (Thor, 2008). Obviously this is a work of fiction and the reason that terrorism occurs, specifically Islamic terrorism is not as simple. Along with this it is ridiculous that there is a secret organization that kills people to keep this secret of a lost text. Thor did mention in the afterward that the revelation of Mohammed and the fact that he was assassinated was fictional and for entertainment purposes (Thor, 2008). That being said however, the underlying portrayal of Islam in this book does give negative connotations as it focuses more on the negative as mentioned previously. Along with the discussion of Islam as a whole, there are specific characters that need to be analyzed.

There are two antagonists in this book, one who is not revealed until the end who is behind the actions committed and an assassin named Matthew Dodd (Thor, 2008). Dodd is a unique character as he is a former American CIA agent who converted to Islam after his family was killed in a car accident, and now works for the Islamist terror group (Thor, 2008). Dodd has

found peace in Islam and finds it better when compared to American culture and needs to replace American culture “Islam provided honor. It provided a code by which to live with dignity and in peace. It wasn’t the problem-it was the solution, and it was the only thing that would save the United States” (Thor, 2008, pp. 42). Dodd represents an interesting characterization; he’s a U.S. citizen who’s a Muslim who operates as an assassin and feels that Islam is the solution to America’s problems. He kills for his religion and feels it is justified (Thor, 2008).

Towards the end of the novel Dodd develops a change in ideology. Mainly due to his discovery of Mohameed’s revelation; in which he realizes that Islam can help America, through cooperation and understanding, and not through violence (Thor, 2008). He denounces the actions of the two men who run the group that he is working for; Mahmood Omar and Imad Ramadan (Thor, 2008). Dodd however is killed at the end of the novel when he lashes out on Ramadan (Thor, 2008). Dodd’s religion does not change at the end, but his interpretation Islam does, from violence to peace. That being said he is still killed by Ramadan, who embraces the violence of Islam. This can symbolize how the violent and peaceful followers of Islam interact; that denouncing violence leads to death for those who try for peace. This also demonstrates the high level of violence and hypocrisy on the radical side of Islam, that they will kill any who do not follow their beliefs.

The other two antagonists play a significant role in plotline as a whole but are not majorly present in the novel itself. The minor of the two, Mahmood Omar is a Saudi born Imam who is a fanatical Jihadist who recruited Dodd, but also was his main contact for Dodd’s assignments (Thor, 2008). Though he is minor, his role as a terrorist and a member of the radical Muslim secret organization is important. His presence demonstrates the evil terrorist mastermind, who happens to be Muslim. The other secondary antagonist who has more of a role than Omar is



Imad Ramadan, who is a member of the Pentagon working on U.S. and Islamic relations (Thor, 2008). Though he is portrayed somewhat negatively in the beginning and middle of the novel, being referred to as an 'Islamic apologist' on multiple occasions, he is eventually revealed to be a top member of the secret Muslim organization at the end of the novel (Thor, 2008). Like Omar, Ramadan is portrayed as being the evil Muslim terrorist mastermind who also happens to work for the U.S. government (Thor, 2008). Though this is fictional, it would speak to a fear of enemy insiders in the U.S. government, particularly Muslim insiders.

The Ramadan character represents the Muslim insider, while the character of Ozbek represents the 'good' Muslim. Ozbek works for the FBI, loves his country and plays an important role in the plot (Thor, 2008). Though his religion is mentioned and he denounces the violent Muslims, his role as an American agent overshadows his religion; he rarely discusses that he practices or follows tenants of the religion. In many ways, it's beneficial to have this 'good' Muslim in the story, however it begs the question of how Muslim is he? As it is mentioned but his dedication to it is not discussed. In many ways he is first and foremost an American, and a Muslim second.

### *Portrayal and justification of Assassination*

What is interesting about this novel is the assassinations and assassins themselves are the antagonists, particularly Matthew Dodd and his colleagues (Thor, 2008). Dodd and his assassins are killing on order from Omar and Ramadan to prevent Mohammed's secret from being revealed (Thor, 2008). In this regards, the assassinations are looked down upon, as they are killing those who are trying to solve the issue of Islamic terrorism (Thor, 2008). The assassinations that these men commit are not portrayed heavily, however overall they are done to secure their cause (Thor, 2008). In the end of the novel, the main antagonist Dodd is killed

however Harvath does not kill him, Ramadan does after Dodd attacks him and Harvath immediately kills Ramadan after Dodd's death (Thor, 2008). There is real no justification for that as it is convoluted. That being said however, the Islamic assassins are portrayed negatively and unjustified, where as we have seen multiple times frequently, American protagonists are engaging in assassination against Muslims and it is always justified.

## **ANALYSIS OF *THE PRINCE OF FIRE* BY DANIEL SILVA**

### *Introduction*

The final novel to be analyzed is by Daniel Silva. This novel will feature a different setting; instead of the characters being American, they are Israeli. Daniel Silva's 2005 novel *The Prince of Fire* was a best seller (Nicholson, 2005). This work features an Israeli counter-terrorist agent named Gabriel Allon, who must track down a terrorist who is threatening harm to him, his allies and his country. The terrorist in question, an individual named Khaled al-Khalifa, who is a Palestinian terrorist that is responsible for an attack on the Israeli embassy in Rome (Silva, 2005). Al-Khalifa also has a personal vendetta against Allon as Allon killed his father, and Allon's superior killed his grandfather (Silva, 2005). He is also angry with Israel in general for an attack on his family's home during one of the conflict (Silva, 2005). This work will explore the conflict between the Israeli's and the Palestinians, including the question of their territory, ethnicity and how both sides wage war in the conflict.

### *Race and ethnicity analysis*

This novel brings in a different perspective, as instead of Americans versus Islamic terrorists, in this series it is Israeli's versus Palestinians. The protagonist is a native Israeli of German parents named Gabriel Allon who works for the intelligence services and works as an

assassin (Silva, 2005). Allon is portrayed as a patriot who loves his country and is willing to kill for it; as he does in this novel and has in the past as he was a member of Operation Wrath of God; when the Israeli's killed Palestinian terrorists responsible for the Munich massacre (Silva, 2005). Since then he lives in recluse; mainly due to a car bombing that killed his son and severely wounded his wife (Silva, 2005). He spends his time focusing on restoring art, however he is occasionally called back in to work (Silva, 2005). Once a bomb goes off near the Israeli embassy in Rome, Allon is brought back in as he needs to track down the mastermind, an individual who has a connection to Allon, which will be discussed later (Silva, 2005). Allon's involvement as an Israeli assassin brings up an interesting question in regards to Israel and its part in the Israeli and Palestine conflict. He and his allies (who will be analyzed later) are devoted to their countries actions; however Allon is more of a representation of Israel as a country rather than as a practitioner of the Jewish religion (Silva, 2005). Yes he it is mentioned various times that he is Jewish however he does not fully practice (Silva, 2005). This is interesting; as the novel focuses on the fact that he is an Israeli rather than his religion; and that he operates against the Palestinians. Lastly Allon feels that his cause is beneficial to the Palestinians, "With the Israelis had come access to a vibrant economy, running water, electricity, and education. Infant mortality rates, once among the highest in the world, plummeted. Literacy rates, among the world's lowest, increased dramatically" (Silva, 2005, pp. 134).

Though Allon is dedicated to Israel's cause; his mentor and boss Ari Shamron, a secondary protagonist, is a major supporter of Israel's cause. Shamron is described as an individual who has worked for the Israeli intelligence services for decades, operating as an assassin and a handler of assassin's (Silva, 2005). He is also the one who hired Allon for Operation Wrath of God (Silva, 2005). Shamron's assassinations will be mentioned later; in this

section his dedication to Israel and the denouncing of Palestine and its allies and feels that the world is turning against Israel

“Within a week of the bombing, there was a massive demonstration in central Rome, not against *Palestine* terror but against *us*. The Europeans are the best friends the Palestinians have. The civilized world has abandon us to our fate. We would never have come back to this land if we weren’t pushed here by the hatred of Europe’s Christians, and now we’re here, they won’t let us fight, lest we antagonize the Arabs in their midst” (Silva, 2005, pp. 124-125).

Shamron displays an us versus them attitude and feels that Israel’s way of life is being threatened by Europe and allying with the enemy. In many ways this makes Israel appear as the victim, that they are being threatened, though the situation is much more complex. Shamron reinforces his beliefs at the end of the novel, in which Allon asks him about his involvement in expelling Palestinians from their homes and villages (Silva, 2005). Shamron states Palestinians brought it on themselves,

“They *are* self-inflicted,” Shamron said. “But was there a blanket strategy of expulsion? Did you engage in ethnic cleansing as a matter of policy? “No,” Shamron said, “and the proof is all around us. You had dinner the other night in Abu Ghosh. If there was a blanket policy of expulsion, why is Abu Ghosh still there? In the Western Galilee, why is Sumayriyya gone but al-Makr still there? Because the residents of Abu Ghosh and al-Makr didn’t try to butcher us. But maybe that was our mistake. Maybe we should have expelled them all instead of trying to retain an Arab minority in our midst” (Silva, 2005, pp. 394).

Shamron represents the idea of Israeli supremacy, that they are right in their claim

because the Palestinian's attacked them and though they spared and did not expelled those who were not aggressive, he feels as though Israel is justified in all its actions. This brings forth an important analysis; that the Israeli's had an absolute claim to their land, even though they moved in on land already occupied by the Palestinian's and forcefully expelled them. Along with that Shamron previously mentioned how the Europeans criticize their actions and blames them for expelling the Jews from Europe. He is maintaining and confirming a victimization justification, while using that same justification that causes damage to the Palestinians.

The main antagonist Khalid al-Khalifa, is a major character in the plotline, but remains a mystery throughout most of the novel. He is masquerading as a French archeologist, to maintain anonymity as well as coordinate attacks (Silva, 2005). Al-Khalifa has an intense motivation to commit harm on Israel as well as a vendetta again Allon and Shamron; as Shamron killed his grandfather, a top level individual among Palestinian fighters who rebelled against Israel's statehood when Israel was created; and against Allon who killed his father, a member of the PLO who took part in the Munich attacks (Silva, 2005). Al-Khalifa was then associated with and effectively raised by Yasar Arafat, and as he grew older he became a radical terrorist, who has committed bombings against an Israeli embassy, along with other bombings and kidnapping Allon's disabled wife (Silva, 2005). Al-Khalifa is the antagonist; he kills innocents and kidnaps disabled women. His religion is not explicitly mentioned, however it is heavily plausible to assume he is Muslim. Interestingly enough, it could be possible for one to sympathize with parts (not all) of al-Khalifa's anger. His family was executed by the Israeli's and he seeks revenge. That in many ways is no different than what Allon and Shamron had done to eliminate the PLO individuals behind the Munich massacre (Silva, 2005). One could not fully condone al-Khalifa's actions, however it is hypocritical to say that he is entirely in the wrong, while the Israeli's are

completely right and justified in their actions of assassination.

*Justification and portrayal of assassination*

This novel features three assassinations and two have been previously mentioned; al-Khalifa's grandfather and father were assassinated and though they occurred before the events of the novel, they were discussed and play an important part in the novel. Lastly the killing of al-Khalifa will also be analyzed. Khalid Al-Khalifa's grandfather was named Asad al-Khalifa who was born in Palestine (Silva, 2005). He became a wealthy criminal and developed a hatred for Jews who were in Palestine before Israel became a state and together with his gang they brutally murder Jews, even giving support to Nazi Germany (Silva, 2005). When Israel became a state and conflict arose, Asad continued to fight Jews and was responsible for killing hundreds of Jews and described as brutal (Silva, 2005). Due to his influence and status, the Israeli's said that he needed to be eliminated (Silva, 2005). He would be killed after Shamron found him and executed him, "Sheikh Asad awakened with a start and reached for his rifle. Shamron fired. Sheikh Asad, as he was dying, gazed into his killer's eyes. "Another will take my place," he said. "I know," replied Shamron; then fired again" (Silva, 2005, pp. 86).

Asad's son Sabri al-Khalifa followed in his father's footsteps in the cause for Palestine. He was recruited by Yasar Arafat and became a prominent Palestinian terrorist, responsible for the deaths of Israeli's and was fictionally involved in the Munich massacre that killed Israeli athletes (Silva, 2005). When Israeli ordered assassin's to find and kill those responsible, Allon was the one who killed Sabri al-Khalifa (Silva, 2005). Both Asad al-Khalifa and Sabri al-Khalifa are described as violent men who were responsible for the deaths of Jews and acts of terror. Israel had decided to act accordingly and kill both individuals. They are however operating on an

eye-for an-eye philosophy; kill those who have killed us. That being said the issue of Palestinian terrorism does not go away, and in this case it breeds anger in the form of Khaled al-Khalifa as he wants vengeance.

Khaled had spread terror throughout the novel, and caused a personal threat to the Allon. He was responsible for bombings and kidnapped and tried to kill Allon's wife before she was rescued (Silva, 2005). They decide to kill Khaled because they believe he will not stop with the violence (Silva, 2005). During a conversation with a man named Eli who is tasked with finding Khaled, Allon explains his motivations, "He's going to kill again. Maybe he'll wait until next April, or maybe a target will come sooner- something that will allow him to temporarily quench his thirst for Jewish blood." "Maybe you suffer from the same thirst?" "A little," Gabriel conceded, "but this isn't about revenge. It's about justice" (Silva, 2005, pp. 384). Allon eventually kills al-Khalifa by shooting him in the head (Silva, 2005). The conversation is interesting, as Allon does have a personal claim in this; however he states that it is about justice, which brings up an interesting concept. Allon and his allies have their own brand of justice, assassination. They also believe that Khaled will keep killing, also justifying their actions. They are going on the premise that because Khaled has killed and may continue to kill as a reasonable justification for assassinating him. Again this is solving violence with violence in a unique situation in which death and violence frequently occur on both sides with no end in sight.

## **CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER 2**

The six novels analyzed in this chapter demonstrate the relationship between race, ethnicity and assassinations. Though fictional, these novels all present an interesting view on those topics which be examined by using the research questions asked previously. The first question asked how Muslims are portrayed in popular culture while the second question asked

how race, ethnicity, gender and religion play a role and the third question is how do theories of racial stereotyping play a role in these elements. The first two questions will be answered simultaneously, with the third be examined after.

In regards to questions one and two, practically all of the novels involve a male individual who is demonstrating his whiteness by his attitudes, patriotism and willingness to kill the enemy. The enemy usually being Middle-Eastern or Muslim is the antithesis of the hero; they are ruthless terrorists who are usually devoted to their cause and use religion as an excuse. The portrayal of their religious motivation reinforces the unfortunate stereotypes that Muslims are radical terrorists. The antagonist is generally a radical Islamic terrorist, however there are minority cases in which the antagonist is white who usually supports terrorists or is sympathetic. The protagonist faces off against the terrorist for either personal reasons or for duty in regards to his country, as they are patriotic and this reinforces their whiteness. That is we have seen that the whiteness of the protagonists is also demonstrated through their patriotism and service to their country as all three main ones have done service one way or another. This culminates with the assassination of the terrorist by the protagonist and the assassination is justified in committing the assassination, though the assassination goes against the laws of war and can be classified as illegal. The protagonist's motivations, whiteness and American values overshadow the legality of assassination for the sake of killing the enemy who is portrayed as savage.

The third question of racial and ethnic stereotypes in racial theory are portrayed through each of the six books. As mentioned, the Muslim antagonists are portrayed as religious but also savage. Essentially all of them are Middle-Easterners yet those who are not are either supporters of them or converts to Islam. The majority portrayed in the novels who are the antagonists and also killed are Middle-Easterners, which according to Nurullah (2010) have been increasing in



portrayals of antagonists and terrorists in media and popular culture. Being Middle-Eastern also coincides with being a devout Muslim, which sets the precedent that being Middle-Eastern immediately brings the assumption that they are Muslim and therefore both are evil (Nurullah, 2010; Garner & Selod, 2015). Lastly the Middle-Eastern/Muslim antagonist is also portrayed as being savage. These novels have shown various incidents of the Middle-Eastern antagonist torturing individuals or killing civilians with no remorse. This can relate to Nurullah's (2010) idea of negative portrayals of Muslims in the media, yet the savage aspect can be applied to other theorists as well. Hall (1997) stated that popular culture frequently portrayed African-Americans as savages with no remorse. This portrayal of savagery has now been transferred over to Muslims, demonstrating that making the antagonist appear as savage delegitimizes them and provides justification for the protagonist, who as we have seen is portrayed as honorable and moral.

This chapter was rich in portrayals of race, ethnicity and religion for the protagonists and antagonists. These representations set forth a concrete base for the rest of this work, as it effectively demonstrates the portrayals and helps answer the questions presented. All of the novels contained heavy evidence to support the questions, as they were rich in content. One thing that was learned from this chapter is that fictional novels have intense and upfront portrayals of racial representations, specifically in regards to antagonists. Though in-depth analysis and symbolism was needed, most of the antagonists who were Muslim had been portrayed in a negative way, yes there was the case of the religious Muslim who is portrayed as a moderate in Thor's novel *The Last Patriot*, however that appeared to be the only instance. A majority of the antagonists portrayed were Muslim and were committing horrible acts of violence.

## CHAPTER 3: FILMS THAT PORTRAY ASSASSINATION

### INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 3

We have seen the representation of race in regards to assassination in novels and will now move onto films that portray assassination. Unlike novels where the reader themselves need to visualize everything (race, ethnicity and portrayals) these elements are already set up. This will make analysis easy in most ways, however critiquing a film versus a novel has its own issues, along with this change in analysis a film is also shorter than a novel (in some cases) and there are different elements that will be viewed. The same questions will be asked and analysis will be completed in those questions, how does race, ethnicity and identity play a part in the portrayal of assassination? As mentioned these questions will be answered similar to novels, however the visualization aspect will be involved.

### ANALYSIS OF STEVEN SPIELBERG'S *MUNICH*

#### *Introduction*

Steven Spielberg's 2005 film *Munich* presents a unique look at assassination and how it relates to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by using a historical event through race, ethnicity, identity and assassination. The film involves a group of Israeli assassins who are tasked with killing those responsible for the 1972 killing of Israeli athletes during the Olympic Games (Spielberg, Kushner & Roth, 2005). The film is a fictionalized account (in regards to the protagonists and certain events) however it also includes real world events and actions that occurred (Dargis, 2005). The film did receive criticism for the liberties it took in regards to fiction and storyline; however it was also well received for the storyline, along with the political and social commentary (Dargis, 2005; Nathan, 2006). *Munich* involves former bodyguard to Israeli officials Avner Kaufman (portrayed by Eric Bana) hired by Mossad to track down the

architects of the Munich massacre, who are all Palestinian (Spielberg et al, 2005). The film itself explores the legality and ethics of the assassinations, as the main characters debate it along with the analysis of the race of those involved (Spielberg et al, 2005)..

### *Race and ethnicity analysis*

*Munich* includes elements race and ethnicity and how it fits into the narrative in regards to the protagonists and antagonists, though it is not explicitly discussed it is shown which is just as important. This film presents the Israeli assassins as individuals doing their job for the safety and security of their country; however they are also portrayed as having their own faults and personal problems. Though the Palestinians who they are assigned to kill are not necessarily on screen until their deaths, yet their presence and involvement in the plot line is important. As before, the protagonists will be analyzed first and then the antagonists as the protagonists are central to the plot and take up most of the scenes in the film, if not all.

The central protagonist in the film, Avner Kaufman has briefly been explained however there is more detail into his background and motivations that need to be examined. Kaufman was a former bodyguard and personally knows the Israeli prime minister, who along with Mossad hired him to head up the assassination team (Spielberg et al, 2005). In a scene in which Kaufmann is speaking to a clerk who is securing their anonymity for their mission, the clerk refers to Kaufman as a “Yekke” in which Kaufman replies that he was born in Israel (Spielberg et al, 2005). The clerk asks where Kaufman’s grandfather was from in which Kaufman replies that his grandfather was from Frankfurt and the clerk states that he is still a “Yekke” (Spielberg et al, 2005). A ‘Yekke’ is an individual of German-Jewish descent who moved to Israel following the end of World War Two (Stock, 2009). This is an interesting look on who is Israeli in the traditional sense; that in this scene it is hard to distinguish who a ‘true’ Israeli, that is the

word “Yekke” is used as somewhat of a slur indicating a hierarchy in the Israeli social structure. Still, though Kaufman is called this he is still put in an authority of power as he leads the assassination team.

Other members of the Israel assassin’s demonstrate a racial and ethnic component to the story line. For example, the character Steve (portrayed by Daniel Craig) is white (that is his skin color is fair as is hair) this is obviously due to the actor himself, however it is important to note that he adamantly follows and supports the Israeli cause and belief in what he is doing is right along with the fact that he the central secondary protagonist and is the only member of the assassin team besides Kaufman who does not die (Spielberg et al, 2005). Other members of the assassin team who are killed are Carl (portrayed by Ciarán Hinds), Hans (portrayed by Hanns Zischler) and Robert (portrayed by Mathieu Kassovitz) (Spielberg et al, 2005). These individuals range from white to a light shade of olive skin, which is important as it contrasts with the individuals who they are killing. The darkest individual among them are Carl and Robert however that is as dark as the kill team goes when compared to the Palestinians.

The Palestinian’s are the stereotypical antagonists in this film and their racial portrayal is important. At the beginning of the film, the Palestinian terrorists who are members of Black September attack Israel athletes and Munich, killing some and holding the rest hostage (Spielberg et al, 2005). They are considerably darker than the Israelis and demonstrate a high amount of brutality and disregard for life (Spielberg et al, 2005). When the Israeli assassins are sent out to eliminate the leaders of Black September and the organizers of the massacre, the leaders are revealed and portrayed. Most that are portrayed are of a darker complexion when compared to the Israeli’s (Spielberg et al, 2005). The first individual killed is Wael Zwaiter (portrayed by Makram Houry) who is shot by Kaufman and Robert (Spielberg et al, 2005). He

does have lightest skin tone of the Palestinians; however he is the outlier, as others killed are significantly darker. The next individual they kill is Mahmoud Hamshari (portrayed by Igal Naor) who is assassinated by a bomb (Spielberg et al, 2005). Hamshari is of a darker skin tone, and his role in the Munich massacre is that he helped coordinate the attack (Spielberg et al, 2005). There are other individuals who are killed by the assassins.

The next individual killed by the team is Hussein Abd Al Chir (portrayed by Mostefa Djadjam) also assassinated by a bomb; and who is also portrayed as a darker skinned individual (Spielberg et al, 2005). Next the Israel's shoot and kill three targets, Abu Yousseff (portrayed by Dirar Suleiman) , Kamal Adwan (portrayed by Ziad Adwan), and Kamal Nasser (portrayed by Bijan Daneshmand) during a raid in Beirut (Spielberg et al, 2005). All three are killed suddenly and fast as the scene is filled with intense action, however it is revealed that all three are of dark complexion (Spielberg et al, 2005). After they kill those three they discover that an individual named Zaid Muchassi (portrayed by Djemel Barek) has taken over Hamshari role in Black September (Spielberg et al, 2005). They then proceed to kill him and like the others, his skin color is darker than the protagonists (Spielberg et al, 2005).

All of the men killed by the assassins had a skin color either as dark as the Israelis or darker. This demonstrates that though they can have a similar skin color, their actions are a representation of that skin color. Their nationality also plays an important part in this, yes they inhabit the same area of land as the Israelis but they are different. They take up a different nationality; in other words a different identity. Their skin color is related to their identity as Palestinians, something that is different than the Israeli identity. Add in the actions that they commit and the innocents they have killed portrays this identity as evil. The Israelis may have a different identity though they share the same skin, however they feel 'justified' in their actions

that is ironically related to their identity (which will be explored later).

Lastly there is an individual who is killed by the team who is white, a Dutch assassin named Jeanette (portrayed by Marie-Josée Croze) who was hired to kill members of the Israeli assassins and is successful in killing Carl (Spielberg et al, 2005). She is shot multiple times and killed by Kaufman, Steve and Hans in retaliation for Carl (Spielberg et al, 2005). She is white, however her involvement in the death of Carl is important to the story, and also uses sex appeal to lure Carl (as she tried to lure Kaufman the same way) (Spielberg et al, 2005). This is interesting, as her sneakiness and cunning puts her in the same light as the Palestinians, possibly worse because she was hired to do it, making her race null and void in the situation, as the three Israelis repeatedly shoot her well past the point of death. Her character is that of a femme fatale and her involvement deserves death. As demonstrated previously with white individuals who have been killed, her actions betray her skin color; she has helped their enemy therefore she deserves the same fate as them.

### *Portrayal and justification for assassination*

This film brings up the ethics of assassination particularly in relation to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as it is a central theme of the film. The main plotline is based on that of revenge; Palestinian terrorists kill Israeli's in a foreign country and the Israeli's respond with violence by killing those who planned the attack (Spielberg et al, 2005). The first instance in which the reasons for conducting the assassinations are when members of the Israeli government are discussing the Munich massacre and how to respond (Spielberg et al, 2005). The meeting is headed by Israeli prime minister Golda Meir (portrayed by Lynn Cohen) in which she states that Israel needs to respond with force for the actions that were committed against them as they need to establish a sense of strength and that they cannot appear weak or be bullied (Spielberg et al,

2005).

Meir mentions that when the Israeli's are killed the rest of the world does not care; and when it is mentioned that they conduct air strikes it is not noticed (Spielberg et al, 2005). She believes that this is why they need to demonstrate a show of force against the Black September organization and those who fall in line with them (Spielberg et al, 2005). Interestingly enough however, she later states in this same scene that Israel is a nation of laws that respects civilization (Spielberg et al, 2005). This is contradictory in many ways, as she is stating that they are a nation of laws, yet they are about to engage in assassination, and as it has been mentioned previously assassination itself is generally construed as illegal at the most and complicated at least. Meir states that Israeli's and Jews have been abused and taken advantage of and the world ignores them (going back to the identity as mentioned previously, they feel they have a unique identity) so they must respond with force in regards to the massacre, yet they are willing to do the same thing the Black September members did. In the beginning of the film however the Israeli's confirm the architects of the massacre and the heads of the organization; they are clearly guilty of the crime while they directed the killing of innocent Israelis. Therefore it is possible to argue that since they committed the act and that nothing has been done (legally) justice should be done to the aggressors. On the other hand they are killing those who planned the killing, not attempting to pursue legal ways. Interestingly enough the film does not mention that legal options were considered, it immediately jumps into assassination.

As the film progresses the Palestinian point of view is mentioned at various points however there is a general theme in the Palestinian side; that the Israeli's have put Palestinians in camps and has killed civilians by airstrikes (Spielberg et al, 2005). In one scene, the Israeli assassin Robert goes undercover as a reporter to interview Hamshari in his home so he can plant

a bomb (Spielberg et al, 2005). While 'interviewing' Hamshari, Hamshari states that Palestinian homes have been taken from them, they have been shuffled into camps and that Palestinian blood has been shed (Spielberg et al, 2005). He also states that two hundred innocent Palestinians had been killed in an airstrike (Spielberg et al, 2005). Along with this, a news report in one scene in which a Palestinian is interviewed where he states that the attacks against Israeli's are getting their voice heard (Spielberg et al, 2005). Both sides are stating that they are being ignored and both sides have committed violence against each other, along with this when violence occurs the other party retaliates and appears to play the victim in the instance while legitimizing their actions.

Lastly there is the views of the Israeli assassins who frequently bring up the ethics and rational behind their actions. The first time they all meet they are having dinner and all state and are aware that they were hired by Mossad in an unofficial capacity (Spielberg et al, 2005). It is at this point that most of the individuals have never killed anyone before but are willing to kill for their cause in which Steve states that they need to think of themselves as a soldier fighting a war (Spielberg et al, 2005). At another point when the assassins decide to use bombs instead of guns it is stated that the Palestinian terrorists use bombs in which Kaufman later states that bombs are the perfect device to use to terrorize terrorists (Spielberg et al, 2005). At one point Kaufman is introduced to a French individual named 'Papa' (portrayed by Michel Lonsdale) who supplies the Israeli assassins with information on their targets as well as the bombs (Spielberg et al, 2005). During their conversation 'Papa' tells Kaufman that the world has been tough on the Jews and that they have a right to respond with violence (Spielberg et al, 2005). Again this is legitimizing the Israeli perspective that they have suffered and been ignored; and that violence is necessary in their particular case, even if it breaks the law and borders on terrorism.



After the team kills the Dutch assassin, Kaufman, Steve, Robert and Hans are having dinner and mourning the loss of Carl (Spielberg et al, 2005). While they are eating Hans states that they have eliminated a majority of their targets and have essentially dismantled Black September (Spielberg et al, 2005). He goes on however to state that there are other terrorist groups forming around the idea that Black September was not violent enough and therefore need to create more violence (Spielberg et al, 2005). Hans then poses the question that if all eleven of their assigned targets were eliminated would Kaufman stop; in which Kaufman states that he would (Spielberg et al, 2005). Hans then asks Kaufman about the replacements that are forming in which Kaufman replies that they will just need to keep killing (Spielberg et al, 2005). This demonstrates the complexity of the situation, the Israeli's are attacked, they kill the attackers and those involved but more terrorists emerge creating more violence in which the Israeli's will continue to respond with violence. That appears to be a major theme in the film overall as well as personally as most of the Israeli assassins are killed in retaliatory attacks as mentioned previously (Spielberg et al, 2005). This film looks at the level of violence Israel is willing to go to for the security of their state, however that level of violence is reciprocated and it demonstrates how it is never ending. In regards to this work it demonstrates that the act of assassination does not achieve a proper end to violence, just more violence and that though there is an attempt at justification the outcomes negate that. It is important to note though that though ethics and justification as it relates to assassination is critical to the film (and then present in this work), the notion of race, ethnicity and ethnic identity is involved in this issue, as they are killing each other over land and also over their ethnic identity and what they view as their homeland. Their race and ethnicity coincides with their actions and violence to one another.

**ANALYSIS OF MARK BOAL'S AND KATHERINE BIGELOW'S *ZERO DARK THIRTY****Introduction*

The 2012 film *Zero Dark Thirty* written by Mark Boal directed by Katherine Bigelow looks at the Central Intelligence Agency's search for and eventually killing of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin-Laden. Though a majority of the film is about the intelligence gathering of Bin-Laden's location, the ending of the film depicts his killing at the hands of a United States special operations team (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). Though the end shows the actual assassination, the film as a whole has much to say in the portrayal of race and ethnicity in the War on Terror along with the act of assassination that ends the film. The film follows CIA agent Maya (portrayed by Jessica Chastain) and how she is involved in the manhunt as well as her actions that assist in leading to Bin-Laden's hideout (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). During the manhunt she witnesses and participates in acts of torture, witnesses acts of terrorism and assists the special operations team on their raid against Bin Laden (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). These instances plus other scenes demonstrate how race and ethnicity is involved and towards the end demonstrates the legitimacy and portrayal of assassination.

*Race and ethnicity analysis*

The race and ethnicity of the characters in this film is unique in regards to all individuals involved. That being said there is also an interesting in this film (though not related to race or ethnicity) that has not be central to the previous films and novels mentioned but still important; the fact that the main character of this film, Maya, is a woman. One could assume that the introduction of this element may change the dynamic of the film, however it does not, as many elements previously mentioned still exist. Though Maya is the central character, the entire

plotline focuses on a unique situation; the CIA's hunt for Bin Laden which overshadows the gender role with elements previously mentioned.

Like the protagonists in other works, Maya is white, as are a vast majority of the secondary protagonists in the film. The only exception to this are a CIA analyst named Jack (portrayed by Harold Perrineau) who is African American, a CIA operative named Larry (portrayed by Edgar Ramirez) who is Hispanic and CIA operative Hakim (portrayed by Fares Fares) who is Middle-Eastern (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). Though these individuals are minorities their role as members of the CIA along with their assistance in finding Bin Laden overshadows their race in the narrative as they are working with the white dominated CIA and are working towards the de facto goal. The similar situation applies to the United States special operations team that kills Bin Laden, they are all white (there does appear to be an African-American who is a part of the team however he is briefly shown and does not play a substantial) and the two main figures are white, Patrick (portrayed by Joel Edgerton) and Justin (portrayed by Chris Pratt) (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). All of these members constitute different races, however they are all American and contain a high degree of whiteness, not in regards to actual race, but that of the American identity as in conjunction with race, they may not physically be white, but their roles and actions are what we have seen be portrayed by white Americans along with the fact that a majority of them are indeed white.

When Maya is introduced in the film, she is complicit in actions that the CIA committed that were against the law, mainly torture. In the beginning of the film Maya watches fellow CIA officer Dan (portrayed by Jason Clarke) interrogate and torture (via waterboarding) an Al-Qaeda member named Ammar (portrayed by Reda Kateb) (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). After repeated torture at the hands of Dan and Maya Ammar eventually breaks and reveals to Maya the name of

a top level Al-Qaeda operative with ties to Bin-Laden (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). This scene appears to legitimize the act of torture as it demonstrates that it is effective and it shows the limits the government was willing to take to get information (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). In the scene they brutalize Ammar, who is Middle-Eastern, and in many ways it represents a power dynamic; two white individuals in authority are using acts deemed illegal against a Middle-Eastern individual (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). To add further 'legitimacy' it was mentioned that Ammar is associated with Al-Qaeda so it represents his guilt as the enemy and also portrays him as an enemy. Also the fact that Al-Qaeda planned and executed the September 11 attacks the torture, and how his race plays into it, can illicit an emotional response and portrays him as evil by his association.

As the film progresses, Maya is constantly driven by her need to find Bin-Laden (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). The film covers a substantial period of time, and shows dramatic recreations of terrorist attacks that occurred. These include a bombing at a hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan where Maya is meeting a fellow agent (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). Though Maya is a fictional character, the bombing did indeed occur on September 20, 2008 killing over 40 people and was undertaken by Al-Qaeda (Gall, 2008). Maya is also present for a suicide bombing in Afghanistan that kills fellow CIA agents, and was committed by an individual who was acting as double agent for Al-Qaeda and approached the American CIA with information in regards to Al-Qaeda but instead used it to get close with a suicide vest and kill agents one of whom Maya is close with (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). The real life incident occurred in Afghanistan on December 20, 2009 and led to the deaths of seven CIA agents (Nasaw, 2009).

In both of these instances, it is either heavily assumed (as is the hotel bombing) or shown (as is the bombing in Afghanistan) that the perpetrators were Middle-Eastern. Along with this,

the fact that the attacks were committed by members of Al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization driven by a radical sect of Islamic ideology, is it assumed that radical Islam is involved, therefore adding the religious component. In many ways these scenes invoke a sense of realism, and are central to the theme, making the search for Bin-Laden more necessary and gives the impression that the need to eliminate Bin-Laden and stop the terrorists necessary. The fact that the terrorists portrayed are always Middle-Eastern (and assumed Muslim by their association with Al-Qaeda) plays into the stereotype that terrorists are Muslims (and vice versa), however that is not the reality but in this film it adds the assumption and reinforces the stereotype.

### *Justification for assassination and portrayal*

The film follows the long lasting manhunt for Osama Bin-Laden, and though it focuses extensively on the manhunt itself, the killing of Bin-Laden is a major scene. The official motive and justification for the assassination is the fact that the CIA wanted to visually confirm that it was indeed Bin-Laden in the compound in Pakistan, so therefore it made sense to send the special operations team to confirm it (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). When Maya is speaking to one of the special operations members she informs him that she did not want to use them and instead drop a bomb on the compound (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). Maya demonstrates the want to officially kill Bin-Laden, and in many ways she is a representation of America, that is she is patriotic, in her will to find Bin-Laden as most Americans wanted that and that, and that she fully committed herself to her country as she joined the CIA and most likely made sacrifices to her personal life to commit to finding Bin-Laden. It has been demonstrated that the U.S. frequently engages in assassination against terrorists, and Maya is a representation of the American want to kill terrorists, specifically the one who the U.S. has been hunting for a decade.

When the special operations team is cleared to assault the compound where they think

Bin-Laden is, Maya watches from a nearby base while the special operations team executes the mission (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). The team is successful in killing Bin-Laden and when they enter the room in which Bin-Laden is hiding they kill him (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). They also kill others who are present at the compound that shoot at them (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). When the team kills Bin-Laden it appears quick and calculated, giving the impression that it was deliberate. After the mission is successful the film ends with Maya crying (Boal & Bigelow, 2012). This can be due to the fact that she has spent her career looking for Bin-Laden. To dig deeper however, Maya is again a representation of the U.S., the fact that the hunt for one of the most wanted terrorists in the world was finally caught and then eliminated. In reality some citizens of the U.S. rejoiced and celebrated over the death of Bin-Laden (Epatko, 2011). Though there was an obvious cause for celebration, the man who was the face of one of the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil and had evaded capture. On the other end of the spectrum is the question of legality.

The attack that the U.S. launched against Bin-Laden brings up the question of legality. Though the U.S. had been actively looking for Bin-Laden, they had found his location in a questionable area, Pakistan, an ally to the U.S. and sovereign nation (Sanders, 2014). They then proceeded to launch a secret mission against this sovereign nation, technically invading it with U.S. troops and conducting an assassination (Sanders, 2014). The U.S. uses the term 'targeted killing' however Sanders argues that this terminology is wrong as it is still technically and legally assassination (Sanders, 2014). Yes Al-Qaeda is a violent terrorist organization that has caused thousands of civilian deaths, however Sanders states that terrorism should be handled by law enforcement and not military and the U.S. was on Al-Qaeda and using 'targeted killing' is illegal (Sanders, 2014). *Zero Dark Thirty* demonstrates the war on terror and the real life

assassination against Bin-Laden and portrays in a way that the U.S. government needs to take extreme measures to find terrorists and it works (as evident in the torture scenes and assassination).

## **ANALYSIS OF STEPHEN GAGHAN'S *SYRIANA***

### *Introduction*

Stephen Gaghan's 2005 film *Syriana* examines how the oil industry and how it has an influence throughout the globe and from different perspectives. These perspectives range from oil workers, to industrialists, speculators and the CIA (Gaghan, 2005). Though at first these perspectives seem out of place, they eventually blend together with characters interacting. The primary focus of this analysis is on the CIA and Bob Barnes (portrayed by George Clooney) a CIA agent who they send on an assassination mission against a wealthy and influential Saudi oil businessman Prince Nasir Al-Subaai (portrayed by Alexander Siddig) (Gaghan, 2005). This film however is different from the previous films analyzed, as there is complication for all involved as the protagonists and antagonists have non-traditional roles, something that will be detailed further on and clarified.

### *Race and ethnicity analysis*

This film is unique as it provides multiple perspectives on the oil industry from different points of view and in this unique way the analysis will be different as the race and ethnicity section will be complex. One of the main protagonists in the film (and main individual for this analysis) is Bob Barnes. Other protagonists include analyst Bryan Woodman (portrayed by Matt Damon) and attorney Bennet Holiday (portrayed by Jeffery Wright) who is investigating a questionable merger of two oil companies (Gaghan, 2005). Though these individuals are key to

the film, another storyline occurs in the film involving an oil worker named Wasim Ahmed Khan (portrayed by Mazhar Munir) who gets involved with a fundamentalist organization (Gaghan, 2005). Wasim's involvement is important later in the film and is also complicated. Therefore the major focus of this analysis however will be on Barnes, Nasir and Wasim. Along with the fundamentalism aspect, the CIA is involved in the assassination of Nasir that happens towards the end of the film, an attack that kills Barnes when Barnes is betrayed and framed by the CIA and tries to warn Nasir of the assassination (Gaghan, 2005). Members of the CIA are involved and complicit in the assassination and therefore are antagonists while also being composed of mostly white individuals (Gaghan, 2005).

Barnes is portrayed as an individual who is dedicated to his job, even though it has led to issues with his family life. He has been sent on operations throughout the Middle-East and it is confirmed in the film that he has killed for the CIA (and it is shown in the opening scene), the time in these areas led to his son presenting displeasure for his father's work and it is alluded that it has led to a divorce with his wife (Gaghan, 2005). Barnes is loyal to his job; however he is willing to question the CIA's actions. One of which is when a military grade missile goes missing after an operation and is wondering where it went (Gaghan, 2005). The CIA claims that the missile was stolen by an Egyptian terrorist group and that Nasir is involved in financing the organization (Gaghan, 2005). They put Barnes in charge of killing Nasir who takes the job willingly (Gaghan, 2005). Barnes has a willingness to do his job and get his job done, a quality that people respect and endear. As the story progresses however Barnes realizes that the CIA is planning to kill Nasir not because of the missing missile but because Nasir is going against his father who is a supporter and beneficiary of a major oil company operating in the area (Gaghan, 2005). Barnes is then disavowed by the CIA and goes to warn Nasir of the assassination attempt



but as mentioned he is too late as they are both killed (Gaghan, 2005). Barnes is the hardworking man, who is not afraid to question authority and willing to do the right thing, even if it costs him his life.

Prince Nasir is an important character in the storyline as a whole and in the assassination sub-plot as well as is racial representation. Nasir is dark-skinned and unlike most of the individuals that have been he is shown in a positive light. He is willing to go against his wealthy father who supports the U.S. business involvement in the country, something that Nasir dislikes, as he wants to move his country away from big oil and U.S. involvement and push his country into the future and out of U.S. influence (Gaghan, 2005). He is also shown to be compassionate, as is in the case when Woodman's son is accidentally killed in an accident at a party hosted by Nasir's family; in which Nasir offers Woodman financial compensation, who refuses but then agrees to be Nasir's adviser for economics (Gaghan, 2005). Nasir's personally goals, compassion and willingness for progress puts him in the category of a protagonist and against the stereotype that has been examined.

The opposite can be said for Wasim, whose introduction originally puts him as a protagonist. He is shown as a migrant worker who moved to a new country for a job in the oil industry, but is then laid off when the oil company is merged with another company (Gaghan, 2005). Wasim's unemployment leads him to wandering and he eventually comes across a Muslim speaker (Gaghan, 2005). The cleric is a radical fundamentalist and indoctrinates Wasim towards the radical ideology, stating that the Koran should be law in the land and the government should not have authority (Gaghan, 2005). The cleric convinces Wasim to join him in an attack against an oil tanker, of which he agrees (Gaghan, 2005). The attack is committed with the missing missile and Wasim heads the attack with a suicide charge (Gaghan, 2005). This is

interesting, as it demonstrates how easy an individual can be indoctrinated into radical Islam.

Though it is portrayed in the typical stereotypical manner of a young man convinced to do a suicide attack, it also brings up an important concept, how and why they are indoctrinated.

Wasim was young and unemployed, he tried to find work but could not and instead found solace in religion and was able to be molded, a concept that may drive some to turn to terrorism.

### *Portrayal and justification for assassination*

There are two instances of assassination of this film, one minor to the plot and one major. The minor occurs in the beginning in which Barnes plants an explosive trap in a missile that is being sold to arms dealers, there are two present and one explodes while another goes missing setting up a sub-plot in the film (Gaghan, 2005). The explosion kills the intended targets, and though the reasons behind the assassination are not fully mentioned in the film, the fact that Barnes and the CIA is involved as well as the targets it can be assumed it is to prevent arms trafficking (Gaghan, 2005). As mentioned, later on in the film the missile was taken by the radical Muslim cleric, however the CIA lead Barnes to believe that Nasir is involved in the theft, which is not true as the CIA is looking to eliminate Nasir using any means necessary (Gaghan, 2005).

Eventually Barnes is disavowed by the CIA when he finds out the truth and their intentions are revealed. They want to eliminate Nasir because he wants to push his country into the future and move away from oil and American interests (Gaghan, 2005). This creates frustration among those in power which leads the CIA to handle the assassination (Gaghan, 2005). Instead of killing Nasir, Barnes goes to warn Nasir of the attack and the CIA needs to find a new way to kill Nasir (Gaghan, 2005). The CIA debates about what to do and they reluctantly decide to use an unmanned drone to launch a missile at Nasir, who is in a car with his family

(Gaghan, 2005). At the moment when Barnes approaches Nasir to warn him, the drone fires the missile that kills Barnes, Nasir and Nasir's family (Gaghan, 2005). This is important in two regards; first it brings up the concept that the U.S. is willing to kill those who go against their interests, using the guise of terrorism. Secondly this scenes use of drones brings up the theme of twenty-first century warfare and assassination; instead of using agents on the ground, they strike from the air via a computer operated drone, and though this film was released in 2005, it foreshadows this new form of warfare that has been utilized extensively since then.

### CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 3

This section on film brought forth a different element in regards to analysis as it was more visual, yet the same questions of race and ethnicity in relation to the act of assassination were still able to be examined, analyzed and answered. The films portrayed brought a different perspective on the issues presented, and brought forth different components as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict was analyzed in a much more deeper and significant way (Daniel Silva's *The Prince of Fire* did touch upon this however *Munich* was able to touch on the issues in a different and wider way, still both are important). Along with this *Zero Dark Thirty* added a woman protagonist, an element that had not been present in the novels and two other films, as white males were the central protagonists. Still Maya demonstrated the same American values and whiteness as those in the other works. Lastly, *Syriana* looked at the complexity of Islamic terror and the issues in the Middle-East which helped ask and answer briefly what can lead to Islamic terror and also who the United States views as a 'terrorist' in regards to Nasir. With all of these different elements, race, ethnicity, identity and how they relate to assassination were still themes that could be explored.

The questions asked will now be answered; for the question of how are Muslims

portrayed in contemporary media, in regards to this chapter it is different from chapter two in a few ways. The major element being that identity and race overshadows the religious component, mainly in two out of the three films. In *Munich* the Israeli and Palestinian identities are more heavily represented than that of the Islamic identity, however it does not eliminate it. The Israeli/Palestinian issue is extremely complex and though there is more of a territorial than religious component to it, one cannot dispute that religion plays a role, no matter how small, in the conflict. In *Zero Dark Thirty* the Islamic religion is not explicitly discussed however it is heavily alluded to, that is most are aware that members of Al-Qaeda are Muslim, and Al-Qaeda members being the antagonists ( and being the target of the killing) demonstrates the connection though it may be subtle. *Syriana* demonstrates how Islamic teachings can lead one to commit terrorism, yet the actual individual who is killed is killed more for political over religious reasons, his skin color matters more than religion. The film does however portray Arabs who are desperate prone to extremist indoctrination, something that could happen in any religion, but this film focuses on Islam.

The second question that focuses on race, ethnicity, gender and religion in regards to assassination can be more easily explained, especially by using examples previously mentioned in regards to both protagonists and antagonists. For all three films; race, not religion is the key component. All of the protagonists in the film are white or represent whiteness as a symbol. The antagonists (besides some in *Syriana*) are of a darker skin tone, mostly of Middle-Eastern descent. The outlier in *Syriana* is that the CIA is portrayed as antagonists, yet they are also portrayed as creating a terrorist in Nasir as they frame him as an arms dealer and terrorist. Though they are the real enemies this deception speaks to many layers and brings up the question of how the enemy is made to be the enemy. Also in this film is how the radical Islamic terrorist

is literally created, through unemployment, poor living conditions and a willingness to find solitude. The film focuses on the identity and how individuals can be painted as being a terrorist, or actually being made into one. It is important to note again that both individuals in question (Nasir and Wasim) are Middle-Eastern. The gender component is important and unique to this section, as this is the only chapter in which the protagonist is female. Though she is female, her American qualities overshadow her gender; as she is portrayed as one who is dedicated to her country and its cause in stopping terrorism.

The third question which asks how can the portrayals of Muslim be explained using racial theory? For this we will go back to the work of Stuart Hall, who looked at popular culture representations of race. Though these works did have a majority of Middle-Eastern/Arabs portrayed the overt stereotypes were missing (when compared to the novels that had them shown more openly) yet they were still present. The clearest example being *Munich* in which the Palestinians were demonstrated as being deserving of their assassinations for the brutality that they committed, and that the Israeli's were justified in their actions. Hall (1997) examination of race in media shows that the other is generally portrayed as savage and brutal and deserving of treatment they receive. In this work as well the Israelis appear to be forgiven for their actions as they have historically been victims. In regards to this Hall (1997) stated that the white protagonists will be portrayed as good, though in this film the protagonists are not white they still represent the qualities of whiteness and even Americanness, therefore they are good and justified in their actions.

## CHAPTER 4: ASSASSINATION ON TELEVISION

### *Introduction to Chapter 4*

The last portion that will be analyzed in this analysis will be television shows. Though there will be two series analyzed, with two episodes for one series and one episode for the other series, this section will be structured differently. Instead of each episode getting its own subsection of race and analysis and justification and portrayal of assassination, both sections will have all three episodes as this will be the shortest analysis. Though it will be shorter, the hope will be to still demonstrate the bias in popular culture in regards to assassination and race along with that the portrayal of the protagonist is positive, and that there is still a racial bias towards those portrayed as the enemy. The two television series that will be analyzed are *The Unit* and *Strike Back*, both shows which were popular when they were on air (Walker, 2012; Ryan, 2015). Both shows portray assassination, and offer representations of race, ethnicity and a bias of these and its relation to assassination.

### *Race and ethnicity analysis*

The first series episodes that will be analyzed is *The Unit* which follows members of an elite U.S. special operations team and the missions that they perform (Ryan, 2006). The first episode examined is the season one episode “Non-Permissive Environment” in which members of the unit are fleeing a foreign country as the result of an assassination they had just committed (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). The assassination happens suddenly and occurs in the very beginning of the episode (and will be discussed in the later section), though it happens quick it sets the tone of the episode and the race of all parties involved is important. The antagonist is briefly shown in person and is unnamed (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006).

What is said about him is his actions (which will be discussed in the justification section). That being said however the target in question is also of a darker skin tone that appears to be Middle-Eastern and was reported to be engaging in attacks that are synonymous with Middle-Eastern terrorists (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). The members of the Unit are in Spain and are planning to kill the target from a hotel looking into a conference room (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). The target could possibly be Spanish, however the rhetoric and tone that is used, combined with his skin tone and portrayal gives the heavy assumption that he is Middle-Eastern. He may very well not be, but from observation it is what he appears to be.

Unlike most of the other works examined in this work, *The Unit*, offers something different in regards to race compared to the other works. The members of 'The Unit' are made of individuals of different races. There are two white individuals; Bob (portrayed by Scott Foley) and Mack (portrayed by Max Martini), two African-Americans; Jonas (portrayed by Dennis Haysbert) and Hector (portrayed by Demore Barnes), and lastly a Hispanic named Charles (portrayed by Michael Irby) (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). This is unique that there are a variety of different races working together as a team (unlike other works), however there is not one individual of Middle-Eastern descent or a practitioner of Islamic faith. The fact that a variety of races besides Middle-Easterners is portrayed is interesting as it reinforces the idea that they are the enemy and the fact that there is not a Middle-Easterner reinforces this idea.

All of the members of the team are portrayed as noble, hard-working and dedicated to their job (and therefore their country). The American identity in this show appears to overshadow race. For example, when Jonas returns home from Spain in the episode he discovered that his daughter Betsy (portrayed by Angela Wainwright) plans on following in her father's footsteps and enlist in the U.S. Army (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Jonas

and his wife Molly (portrayed by Regina Taylor) are hesitant however Betsy decides that she wants to do it, not only to honor her father but to serve her country (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Jonas and Molly come to terms with it by realizing it is her decision and Jonas embraces it, admiring her tenacity (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Her willingness and determination to serve her country, and Jonas's acceptance demonstrate strong American values. Though that is not a bad thing to want to serve ones country, the American values of one serving strongly overshadow race, that is they are portrayed as Americans serving their country and not black Americans serving their country. Yes Jonas and his family are black, but their race is not actually discussed, ones service to their country is heavily mentioned. The same can be said for Mack and Bob, both white individuals who are dedicated to their families and their country (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Their service in the military and their families experiences as well appears more paramount than their race. Though the personal lives of Hector and Charles are not shown, it is safe to assume the same. This demonstrates the importance of the American identity in regards to patriotism, something that is not an exclusive factor to Americans in general, but appears to be an exclusive factor in the works for this piece. Adding in the fact that a majority of those portrayed in this piece are white individuals serving their country can demonstrate the relationship of whiteness and being an American and what it means to be one.

The next episode of *The Unit* that will be analyzed is titled "Extreme Rendition" in which the members of the Unit need to break a former member of their team out of prison so he can kill an arms dealer (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). The former member is a man named Alex Deckard (portrayed by Lee Tergesen), who is disavowed by the Unit for engaging in illegal activities, mainly firearms trafficking and is in a Bulgarian prison (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Though he is



wanted by the U.S. government, the Unit and the military want to break him out so they can use him to kill an arms dealer named Victor Brana whom they have had difficulty locating (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). In this episode, the racial aspect will mainly be applied to Deckard (who is white) and Brana (whose racial component will be discussed next as it is complicated), however the protagonists again will be portrayed.

Brana will be analyzed first, as he is the main target of the assassination, yet his actual presence is non-existent. Brana is discussed in dialogue and the only physical portrayal of him is through a brief photograph (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). That being said however he is the main goal of the Units mission in this episode. In the photograph he is portrayed as a darker shade of white, and given his name and countries in which they think he resides in it is able to deduct that he is of Eastern European background along with the fact they mention he conducts operations in Romania (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). In dialogue he is portrayed as elusive and without morals, as he is willing to sell arms, including nuclear materials, to anyone who will buy them mainly enemies of the U.S. government (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Though he is not of Middle-Eastern descent, it is still possible to include him in the perspective of the 'enemy' as he engages in activities with others who the U.S. deems as enemies. Along with this, his mystery and elusiveness provides question of race as does his name. It does not say his country of origin but it gives the allure that he is of Eastern European or Russian descent, a traditional enemy of the U.S. that was feared.

The character of Alex Deckard is important in this section. He is a white individual who has gone against his country and more importantly members of his former team, an act in which they obviously disfavor (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). It is mentioned on a few occasions that he chose money over country; so that he could make more engaging in illicit and treasonous

activities (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Deckard is wanted by the U.S. government, but the information he has in regards to Brana, as well as his ability to get close to him is important to the Unit and the goal of their mission (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Deckard is portrayed as resourceful, cunning and dangerous, while at the same time willing to do anything for personal gain. The Unit members break Deckard out of prison, but before they do, they discuss how to get Deckard to agree to their plan as Deckard knows Brana and will not willing kill him as they are in business (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Instead of asking Deckard outright, they instead decide to trick him into killing Brana (Watson & O'Hara, 2006).

After the Unit members break Deckard out they say that they are willing to compromise with him; the U.S. government will give him leniency back home in exchange for information about Brana (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Deckard states that Brana has planes in Romania and can get in touch with a contact, only if a member of the Unit goes with him undercover (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). The individual who assists Deckard is Bob who introduces him to Yuri (portrayed by Mark Ivanir) a member of Brana's organization (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Deckard states that Bob is working with him and while they are discussing business Bob 'plants' a bug and then immediately shows Deckard, making him think that Brana is deceiving Deckard (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Almost immediately after members of the Unit who are outside shoot up the house they are in killing Yuri and 'killing' Bob (who death is faked and staged), Deckard escapes and thinks Bob is killed and he was set up by Brana, who he later kills (Watson & O'Hara, 2006).

The use of deception by the Unit is interesting for this work in regards to race. As mentioned before, the Unit members are proud of their service and dedicated to their country. They are also willing to engage in assassination and to use deception to get their goals

completed. They dislike Deckard for his betrayal of the Unit and his country and are after the elusive Brana, who they obviously have disdain for (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Deception and betrayal are qualities associated with antagonists, however the Unit members lie and deceive Deckard (in very elaborate ways) to send him over the edge so that he kills Brana and they have no connection to the assassination officially, though they are the ones who set the plan in motion (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). This is interesting, as deception and betrayal are looked down upon, however when done by the protagonists it is portrayed as being justified (which will be analyzed later), still it is important to see the hypocrisy, committing these acts as someone who is portrayed as evil is met with disdain, while when those in power commit the acts it is seen as being done for the greater good.

The next series to be analyzed (and final popular culture element for this work) is *Strike Back*. This series follows two individuals Michael Stonebridge (portrayed by Philip Winchester) and Damian Scott (portrayed by Sullivan Stapleton) who are members of a secret military organization that is a part of the UK military called Section 20 tasked with finding terrorists (Harries, 2010). The episode in question titled "Project Dawn #4" follows Stonebridge and Scott as they attempt to find a former IRA mercenary named Daniel Connelly (portrayed by Liam Cunningham) who is in business with a terrorist the men are after and is believed to be attempting to obtain a weapon of mass destruction (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Connelly and his cohorts are all white, however for this work Connelly will be the focus (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Stonebridge and Scott are also white, and their actions will be examined as well.

Stonebridge and Scott have different motivations for their actions. Stonebridge is a British soldier working with the Section 20 while Scott is a former U.S. army special operations soldier who is brought into Section 20 because of his knowledge of the terrorist that Section 20 is

pursuing (the terrorist in question is an antagonist for most of the season, however for this episode the sole focus will be on Connelly) (Harries, 2010). In this episode Stonebridge is portrayed as a loyal individual, dedicated to his job, and is also married yet he demonstrates a personal flaw as he is having an affair with his co-worker Kate (portrayed by Eva Birthistle) (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Despite his flaws his tenacity and drive overshadow that as throughout the episode his actions demonstrate that of a man who wants to help others and stop terrorists (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Scott is portrayed in a more cynical view when compared to Stonebridge, as he is motivated by the fact that he was framed for a crime that got him dishonorably discharged from the army and Section 20 can clear his name (Harries, 2010; Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). In this episode he is undercover with Connelly's group and needs to play both sides, though he is dedicated to his duty to stop Connelly (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Like Stonebridge, Scott is portrayed as willing to risk anything to help others and to stop acts that will harm innocent people despite his personal motivations (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011).

Connelly, like Stonebridge and Scott is white, but while Stonebridge and Scott represent the 'good' white people, Connelly is portrayed as being a 'bad' white person demonstrated by his actions. Connelly is driven by greed, as he is willing to sell his services to anyone and acquire weapons for terrorists (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). He is also portrayed as a psychopath who will kill indiscriminately on two occasions. The first is a story told by Section 20 leader Eleanor Grant (portrayed by Amanda Mealing) in which she states that Connelly had kidnapped a truck driver and his family and stated that he would kill the man's family unless he drove a truck of explosives into a UK army barracks, if he did the man's family would be let go (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). The man agreed and committed the act however Connelly went back on his word and killed the man's family anyway (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Grant mentions that she was

present at the barracks after the explosion and then heard of Connelly's involvement (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). A similar event occurs later in the episode when Connelly is captured by Stonebridge and Scott while attempting to steal nerve gas; he shows them that he has captured Kate and she has a bomb planted on her (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Connelly states that if they let him go he will disarm the bomb and they reluctantly agree however Connelly goes back on his word and the bomb goes off, killing Kate (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Also in this episode Connelly executed a man who he forced into helping him and his cohorts acquire the nerve gas (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011).

Though Connelly is white, his actions and motivations go against the idea of 'whiteness' as demonstrated in this work. Connelly is a psychopath solely motivated by greed and the pleasure of harming others while also gaining financial success while doing so. Connelly does not appear to be motivated by a particular ideology, though it was mentioned that he was a member of the IRA that does not seem applicable, as his personal desires outweigh those of ideological ones. This portrays him in some ways as being worse than the traditional Islamic terrorists, a theme we have seen before. Though Stonebridge and Scott have their own flaws (Stonebridge particularly) they both are committed to their jobs not for financial motivations or the pleasure of killing, but because in their mind they are doing what is necessary and to save the lives of innocent people. Though both sides are white, they are polar opposites, Stonebridge and Scott represent the expected whiteness while Connelly represents that of a person who goes against what is expected.

#### *Portrayal and justification for assassination*

In *The Unit* episode "Non-Permissive Environment" the assassination that takes place and the justification for it are shown in the opening segment. While the team members are in the

hotel room, Bob and Jonas converse about the target, with Bob stating the target reminds him of someone he knows, in which Jonas responds by saying that he would not know the man as Bob does not know anyone who would bomb a busload of school children (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). This appears to be the motivation for assassination, that the target in question is responsible for the death of innocent children. That however is the extent of the conversation in regards to his actions, but it still speaks to idea of assassination. The act of assassination has been mainly committed by the U.S. against terrorists who are responsible for such attacks (i.e. Osama Bin Laden), therefore it has been demonstrated that this is enough to justify the act in the contemporary world, despite legal and ethical issues associated with it.

When the target enters the conference room, Bob is behind a scoped rifle and identifies the target (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). While this is happening, Jonas is called downstairs by what appears to be a CIA agent who tells him that the assassination is called off as the Spanish government is relinquishing its consent (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Before Jonas can warn the rest of the team, Bob gets clear shot at the target and shoots the man in the chest (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). Jonas comes in immediately after and orders the team to evacuate the country, which they spend the rest of the episode attempting (Redford, Mamet & Lagomarsino, 2006). That being said, there is no mention of any repercussions in regards to the assassination later on the episode.

The second episode of *The Unit* titled “Extreme Rendition” portrays the assassination off screen, however it is mentioned at the end and the justification is present throughout the episode. The Unit members mention on many occasions that Brana is one of the world’s major illegal arms dealers and is willing to distribute nuclear materials and other highly dangerous weapons to countries that are enemies of the U.S. (Watson & O’Hara, 2006). As mentioned previously they

have a hard time locating Brana as he is elusive, therefore they need someone to get close to him to kill him, that man being Deckard (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). After the Unit members deceive Deckard into believing Brana was trying to kill him, the Unit is able to get to Brana through Deckard who does kill Brana at the end of the episode (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). Though the assassination is not shown, a news report states that Brana was decapitated and then had part of his body thrown into a river (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). The Unit members then come to the conclusion that they did eliminate Brana, but it then set the stage for Deckard to take over Brana's operations and would then need to deal with the possibility that they may need to eliminate Deckard, something they said they are willing to do (Watson & O'Hara, 2006). This brings up an important point, that though they are willing and able to kill someone who is an enemy, it allows someone else to take that individual's place who is potentially worse than the one before.

Lastly the episode titled "Project Dawn #4" of the series *Strike Back* will be analyzed. The justification for assassination is in relation to the actions mentioned earlier, the murder of Kate at the hands of Connelly (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). In this aspect, the justification to kill Connelly becomes more personal to Stonebridge (and also Grant, who mentions she has had prior run-ins with Connelly), along with this however, Connelly has also been a major figure in assisting terrorists and has committed terrorist acts himself, therefore there can be other reasons as to why Section 20 wants him killed but the major reason obviously is revenge (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). Grant, Stonebridge and Scott get their revenge against Connelly at the end of the episode; though Connelly escaped they manage to track him to Mozambique where they catch with him and corner him in a secluded area on beach (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). It is at this point where Grant and Stonebridge both execute Connelly by gunshot (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011). The fact that he was killed by both Grant and Stonebridge is important as it relates to revenge,

Stonebridge kills him for Kate and Grant kills him not only Kate but also for his past actions (Spotnitz & Eagles, 2011).

## CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 4

*The Unit* and *Strike Back* both offer a perspective in regards to race in regards to assassination in popular culture as it relates to television, that is there is appositional demonstration for the white characters and their values (or in *The Units* case, white in relation to American values) versus the non-white protagonists (more so in regards to values and actions than actual skin color). These series went against the traditional elements that have been explored in this work, as there were no explicitly killings committed against Middle-Easterners or those of the Islamic faith. It did however bring up other important points. In *The Unit* particularly the episode “Extreme Rendition”, the act of deception is a major theme in regards to assassination, as the Unit used trickery and deceit to get another individual to kill their target, something that speaks clear words about the act of assassination itself, that it is a dirty game that nations will engage in and if possible try to distance themselves from it and ‘keep their hands clean’ in the event of it, especially if it involves a complicated situation. *Strike Back* brings another important point in regards to race, that when a white individual is portrayed as the target of assassination that individual is shown to be an extremely evil individual, one who goes far beyond the traditional terrorist that has been observed. It demonstrates a new level of evil, as the individual in question goes completely against ‘whiteness’ for personal gain and therefore must be eliminated.

As the first two questions of the research questions present feed into one another they will be answered simultaneously. The first question of how are Muslims portrayed in assassination in these media elements is the question that will not be fully answered, as the religious identity of those killed was not properly demonstrated in both *The Unit* and *Strike Back*.



The second question of the figures in these works is represented in race, religion, gender and ethnicity is less complicated. In *The Unit* episode “Non-Permissive Environment” the background of the individual assassinated was not fully stated, however his actions were stated as being reprehensible and his on screen portrayal was that he was darker. The protagonists were of different races; however their actions demonstrated those of white Americans. Similar elements arose in “Extreme Rendition” as the antagonists actions were what led to his assassination, not his race. Yet the members of the Unit had used deceit to get the antagonist assassinated which as mentioned is generally considered unfavorable but do to the fact that they are ‘the good guys’ they get a pass. Lastly, the episode of *Strike Back* demonstrates the biggest outlier in this work, the main antagonist being white; however his actions are what define him that of brutality and deceit. His [Connelly’s] race combined with his actions demonstrates his lack of ‘whiteness’ putting him in the category of the enemy (which will be discussed next).

The third question of racial theory and these assassinations will be applied to the episode “Extreme Rendition” and the episode of *Strike Back*, yes other *The Unit* episode is important however for this question in particular the episode in question has more to offer. As mentioned before the Unit members used trickery to get Deckard to kill Brana, something that many would view as an antagonistic trait. Hall (1997) would look at this again under the lens that the protagonist is just that the protagonist and gets a pass to do what they want due to their whiteness, also adding in the fact that the Unit members feel that they are doing this for the greater good. In *Strike Back*, Connelly’s actions put him in the lens of ‘the other’ under Hall’s critique (Hall, 1997). Though Connelly is white, his deceitfulness and savagery falls under the realm of what African-Americans had been portrayed as in popular culture (Hall, 1997) For this work Hall’s analysis is being extended to the representation of Middle-Easterners and Muslim. In

regards to Connelly he is white but his actions are in the same realm as that of the deceitful and brutal African-America or Middle-Easterner; his actions replace his skin color.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### *Discussion*

American popular culture and the portrayal of the modern world as it relates to the topic of terrorism have shown the negative elements that are present in popular culture. Novels, films, television have added the topic of assassination, an act that had once been viewed as reprehensible and devious is now present in the media average Americans consume and has now been racialized. These works (usually but not always) have a particular theme, a member of the U.S. government (or the allies of the U.S.) going after and killing a radical Muslim or Middle-Easterner and putting it under the justification of national security or sometimes a personal vendetta. In the few cases that have been analyzed in this work where the antagonist is not Muslim or Middle-Eastern, the target in question has gone against the traditional values of whiteness or Americanism whether be it they are assisting the aforementioned Muslim or Middle-Eastern terrorists, are involved in illegal activities for personal gain, or are portrayed as someone who enjoys harming others.

The Middle-Eastern or radical Islamic stereotype is a recent demonization in American popular culture overall, however as we have seen the Middle-Easterners have had negative biases put on them before the Islamic terrorism came to global attention. When looking at American popular culture, the demonization, or othering of non-whites has been a historical normalcy, mainly in regards to African-Americans. The negative stereotypes against African-Americans still exist in popular culture, however the fear of Islamic terrorism and the fact that the U.S. has labeled them an enemy of the state, means that popular culture has capitalized on that fear. The Middle-Easterner has switched from mysterious to violent, and is now the target of this global war on terror real and fictional.

On the other end is an individual who is motivated to stopping those who wish to cause

harm to civilians. This individual is usually white (or demonstrates white qualities), male (minus one case), is intensely patriotic (usually a member of the military or intelligence services), family oriented and/or duty driven, and may or may not be motivated by revenge. These protagonists set a particular precedent that those who are motivated to stop these individuals need to fit this certain criteria. This trope creates something of a 'white savior' who will protect innocents from harm of terrorists who wish to do evil things.

These works also fail to identify other important factors, and also set a negative tone. Not only does it create and capitalize on a racist and stereotypical archetype, it does not acknowledge the fact that assassinations are illegal under international law. The general theme in these works is that assassination is justifiable in most circumstances, no matter what the actual justification is. This is also demonstrated in the real and contemporary use of assassination, it can be justified via the excuse of terrorism, that terrorists are evil, want to cause harm and need to be eliminated. Though on the international level the use of assassination by governments is deemed illegal, it still occurs with no reprisal against the actors. The same can be said in this fictional world, these fictional realities, that mirror the real life use. These fictional actors kill terrorists because they, (the terrorists) intend to cause harm and they (the protagonists) have full authority to do so; with no repercussions for their actions.

The work of Stuart Hall was a major help in this work, in particularly in regards to how protagonists and antagonists are racialized. Yet the work of Edward Said and is also important for this analysis mainly in this conclusion. As mentioned in the literature review, Said stated that the 'Orientals' were portrayed as inferior and the colonists, in their worldview, were the white saviors (Said, 1978). This white savior tone is demonstrated in essentially all of these works analyzed. The protagonist(s) were either white or demonstrated white qualities and it was their

job, despite whatever motivations, to ‘save’ their country from the terrorists planning on doing harm. This combined with Stuart Hall’s theory of racialization in popular culture gives notion to the racialization in popular culture in relation to Muslims/Middle-Easterners and assassinations in these works. Yet there is more to discuss in this regard as well.

The work by Bonilla-Silva (2015) examined how racism is still present in America but has gone ‘underground’ that is Americans still have racist beliefs but do not demonstrate it. In conjunction with this scholars such as Nurullah (2010) and Powell (2011) noted that portrayals of Middle-Easterners and Muslims in contemporary media have been negative. The media in question has demonstrated these negative portrayals while at the same time reinforcing the negative stereotypes that Middle-Easterners and Muslims are savage terrorists who want to kill Americans and their allies. Now the creators of these works may not necessarily be racist, they are creators of entertainment; but the stereotypes against these groups exist and these works use the racialization and racist fears in the works, making the issue worse and also making it accepted.

This also is in relation to an important question; the individuals in these works are being assassinated as they are portrayed as evil, while in reality there are actual Middle-Easterners and Muslims being killed via assassination programs that the U.S. is engaged in (Sanders, 2014; Carson, 2017). Therefore the question must be asked, considered and potentially debated, are these works making the assassination of Middle-Easterners and Muslims more accepted in the public? This is technically a difficult question answer as it would require intense research and surveying, however the works presented show commonality, which is these individuals are bad and are deserving of they get.

#### *Future research*

This work examined three major elements of popular culture in which race, government policy and American attitudes have intersected. Though this work is extensive in examining popular culture as it relates to race and assassination there is more that can be done. In regards to fictional novels it is completely possible to find more works on which assassination is portrayed, in fact more works by the three authors examined generally have that theme in their other works and there are many other authors who write similar books. An academic thesis could be written on novels alone and could assist in answering the question posed in this work. The same can be said for films, though three were examined in this work, there are multiple other films that portray assassination. Television is the weakest of these three, yes there are television shows that portray assassination, however television is a broad in itself and finding television shows that fit that frame for this work was difficult. If I were to propose more research into this topic the main focus would be on fictional novels for the reasons stated and it would be completely possible to put the same questions in that potential analysis as put in this one, as there are a wide variety of novels and we have seen how the portrayals are overt.

### *Social consequences*

The United States policy of assassination is controversial and frequently criticized, yet it is a policy that is still in action. This work took a different approach, as it examined the policy of assassination as it relates to fictional works. Therefore the question would be to ask what type of policy should be recommended? Popular culture is full of different viewpoints and portrayals, some positive, others negative. It would also be impossible and incorrect to police fictional publications and creativity. It is however possible to continue educating individuals on what is present in these works (such as the negative stereotypes as it relates to a particular race). Secondly, the issue and topic of assassination needs to continue to be discussed in the general

public, it appears to be this dirty and taboo subject no one wants to discuss, however it is real and it does cause pain, suffering and lasting ramifications. Discussions on this topic need to take place so that change can be enacted.

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